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Volume 8 Number 1



**PREPRODUCING
THE PRIMEVALS**

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WINTER

FEATURES

SENSE OF WONDER by Frederick S. Clarke

This is an unusual issue. We have in the past devoted an issue to a film that was never released (Vol 6 No 3, THE WICKER MAN), but this is the first time we have devoted an issue to a film that hasn't been made. David Allen's THE PRIMEVALS is in the stage of *pre-production*, a point in the filmmaking process just prior to the start of principal photography—actual filming. Usually, filmmakers are very secretive and publicity shy at this stage of the game, but Paul Mandell convinced David Allen that fantasy film fans and those interested in filmmaking would benefit from learning the *process* by which a large-scale, big-budget dimensional animation film reaches the screen, *as it happens*. To his credit, Allen saw the value of following the step-by-step history of a stop motion production, and agreed to balance his need for secrecy with our need and desire to know. This issue, *Preproducing THE PRIMEVALS* is the result, the first in a *series* of issues and articles we will devote to the production and filming of THE PRIMEVALS over the next two years.

The prospect of such a series will become especially exciting when you learn in this issue a little more about the nature of THE PRIMEVALS and its unique position in the history of feature film stop motion visual effects. Allen created quite a stir several years ago when he refilmed the climax of KING KONG as a television commercial for Volkswagon. Over the years he has worked like other stop motion effects artists, for hire, providing the effects for films over which he had no control, like WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH (with Jim Danforth), THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER, and this year's LASER BLAST. What makes THE PRIMEVALS different from any stop motion effects feature ever made is that David Allen, the stop motion artist, will have creative control over every facet of production. And Allen isn't wasting the opportunity to create just another dinosaur picture. He's striving to put real film values into stop motion, so the quality of the special effects won't stand out like a diamond in the rough. Allen's goal with THE PRIMEVALS is to bring realism to animation, to make an audience accept the fantastic without resorting to the crutch of storybook fantasy. And we'll be there to document his progress, every step of the way. □

PREPRODUCING THE PRIMEVALS

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Front Cover: A special effects sequence from THE PRIMEVALS painted by Barclay Shaw
David Allen animates a Lizard Man for a special effects sequence in THE PRIMEVALS: Background

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PREPRODUCING THE PRIMEVALS



High in the Himalayas of Nepal, the so-called abominable snowman is caught up in a fierce battle with five young Sherpas who savagely attack it with ice axes, poles, and ropes. The Yeti is finally cornered and brought down dead. News of this incident startles the scientific world. While it's being analyzed and evaluated in an American university, all sorts of biological anomalies are showing up that don't make any sense. It appears to be a genetic composite that does not fit into the family tree of natural history as we know it. Ragged scars on the Yeti's body suggest some form of surgery. Scientists are baffled. Back in the Himalayas, increased attacks and new sightings are turning up at an alarming rate.

While all of the above would seem to indicate just another film about the abominable snowman, what we have here is merely a prelude to a story that ricochets off, quite incredibly, into a whole new direction. For talented animator David Allen, **THE PRIMEVALS** is not only a labor of love but one possible solution to the con-



The ten-year story behind the creative genesis of David Allen's multi-million dollar science fiction film epic, now in preparation for filming.

An article and progress report by Paul Mandell

Right: David Allen's concept of an air battle between a flock of Pterodactyls and a WWI Zeppelin and fighter plane, painted in 1968 to illustrate a key sequence in RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING. Left: In 1969, Hammer Films used this promotional art to sell the project to film distributors as ZEPPELIN VS. PTERODACTYLS. Bottom Right: A young David Allen sculpts the prototype for the Lizard Men in RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING, animated creatures which also figure largely in THE PRIMEVALS.

Logo sculpture and artwork designed by Barclay Shaw.



Or: Whatever happened to

RAIDERS of the STONE RING

ceptual anemia that has plagued the stop-motion adventure-fantasy film for so long. Preproduction began in earnest this past February, and about a year and a half will be devoted to the creation of special stop-motion visual effects in *Panavision*, something that hasn't been attempted since Ray Harryhausen's *FIRST MEN IN THE MOON!* Concurrent with *THE PRIMEVALS* (and purely coincidental) is the preproduction work on Jim Danforth's *TIME-GATE*, and while no horseshoe is implied, it is unquestionably an interesting pair of developments. Not since *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* and *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH* has the dimensional animation film been graced with such a long-term schedule for stop-motion effects work (the former took fourteen months to complete; the latter took nearly seventeen months). One thing is certain: Allen's film is not just another dinosaur movie. And unlike his previous work in features which has been mostly contributory (the Chasmosaur sequence in *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*, for example), *THE PRIMEVALS* will be a *David Allen Film*, meaning that Allen will not only design, animate and supervise the intricate effects work, but will co-produce, co-author the script, and direct the live action as well, something he has been anticipating for a long time. *THE PRIMEVALS* should prove to be a major breakthrough for its special genre, since the live action portions of stop-motion films have always suffered from shallow scriptwriting and a comprehension problem on the part of "assigned directors" with no insight into the delicate mechanism that makes it all work as a *good movie*.

Hollywood is a strange microcosm of phenomenal flukes and broken dreams, peopled by filmmakers young and old who take years developing pet projects which never get off the ground due to economic factors or a lack of enthusiasm on the part of producers. Drastic compromises are imposed on the artist by the powers that be until he's forced to toil somewhere in the middle of the road, a world of low budgets and technical limitations. On the other

dark side of the coin, a work often gets produced but fails to pump adrenalin into the hearts and souls of distributors (assuming they have them), and what we have left is an orphan in a storm. For the stop-motion animator and special effects artist, this dilemma is usually a stark reality, with no alms given for talent or concept. Prejudice against animation never helped matters much: surrealistic conflicts between real beings and the chimeras of stop-motion netherworlds are sadly aborted, pieces of dreams that evaporate into the stratosphere and *just maybe*, by some fluke, condense and precipitate on a Hollywood sound stage or in someone's converted garage. Willis O'Brien was the classic case of this syndrome of dashed hopes—*WAR EAGLES* was eclipsed by a real war, *THE VALLEY OF THE MIST* went unproduced, and *GWANGI*, his pet project, did not see realization until Ray Harryhausen unwrapped it an entire generation after its conception. Enduring less of a time span than *GWANGI* in getting off the ground, although equally as frustrating, has been David Allen's *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING*, a title that many have associated with the early part of Allen's career but never knew much about, and one that has weaved its way in and out of fanzines ever since the late sixties. The fact remains that the property, after many grueling gyrations spanning an entire *decade*, has triumphantly evolved into *THE PRIMEVALS*, and the script has reached a level of intelligence and sophistication this type of film has sorely yearned for since the first science fiction film boom of the very early fifties. No other fantasy property in the past ten years has weathered so many rewrites, high hopes, false promises, heartbreaks, and states of hibernation. Now, under the auspices of executive producer Charles Band who is finally gearing up for an ambitious, higher-budgeted product, *THE PRIMEVALS* becomes a reality and promises to be a big prestige adventure-fantasy film for 1980. The blow-by-blow account of how all this came about is something of a saga in itself and an object lesson, perhaps, for would-be animators and filmmakers who

lean towards a more idealistic conception of the ways of Hollywood rather than a pragmatic one.

The genesis of *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING* occurred sometime in 1967, conceived by David Allen with a generous assist from Jim Danforth and Dennis Muren. As the treatment was being written, Forrest J Ackerman erroneously reported its title as being *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RINGS* which was an understandable error, and one that has stuck to the project all these years. There is no plurality involved. The *stone ring* of the title merely signified the mouth of a volcano around which some of the story action took place. The story was a period piece set circa 1925, leaning heavily on the plot devices established by Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, with a dash of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In essence, it was a clever hybridization of certain set pieces from *THE TIME MACHINE* and *THE LOST WORLD*, played-out on a Burroughs style tableau. Of note is a keen resemblance to Willis O'Brien's aborted *WAR EAGLES*. The bulk of the story was presented in flashback for the purpose of a planned presentation reel:

In an ornate Edwardian drawing room are three men talking about their old World War I experiences after a heavy dinner. One of them (the central character) is just finishing up a story and they're all laughing when we cut to him looking very pensive. He asks the group if they remember his job as a war correspondent on board a zeppelin. They reply affirmatively, recalling their belief that it crashed returning from a bombing raid on London and that it burned. The host replies that he never made it to London, that he was blown off course. At this point he begins to recount the story in a loose narrative.

At the outset of the bombing mission, the zeppelin was caught up in a torrential storm that lasted for days. When the storm finally cleared, the crew found themselves hovering over an odd-looking mountain peak in a strange temperate zone, presumably off the coast of Greenland they imagined. An old World War I biplane attached

ABOUT THE COVER

Artist Barclay Shaw based this issue's cover illustrating *THE PRIMEVALS* on a production painting for the film by art director Dave Carson, shown at right. The sequence depicted is "Hologram-Scene 120" in which a sentient alien lizard creature (not to be confused with the lizard *men* in the film) shows a group of explorers the Earth at the dawn of time, when interstellar travellers of his race visited the planet for the first time.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Mandell is a regular contributor who put together our mammoth issue devoted to *STAR WARS* (Vol 6 No 4/ Vol 7 No 1). A native New Yorker, he recently returned from Hollywood, where he worked briefly on the preproduction of *THE PRIMEVALS*, and at Gene Warren's Excelsior Animated Moving Pictures. Over the next two years, Mandell will write a series of articles devoted to the filming of *THE PRIMEVALS*, as work progresses.

Back in the drawing room, his cohorts scoff at the story. One of them asks for some tobacco. As the narrator opens his desk drawer, we see that he has this artifact inside—the mummified hand of a lizard man, used as an icon by the villagers to protect themselves against attack. But he just takes the tobacco out, closing the drawer. He could have shown it to them if he wanted to, but you realize he doesn't want them to believe it anymore.

to the zeppelin's underbelly is used to reconnoiter. No sooner is the plane in flight, piloted by the narrator, than it is attacked by a flock of pterodactyls. An air battle ensues. The plane is disabled and crashes into a valley. The zeppelin is also disabled but escapes from the reptiles and flies from view. Disembarking, shaken but unhurt, from his wrecked craft, the pilot starts his trek across the valley and encounters a village of Vikings, inexplicable survivors of ancient Nordic times. They warn him of malevolent lizard men whom the villagers ward off superstitiously by hanging a mummified lizard hand on a branch of a tree. One of the more predictable characters, an Aryan Viking maiden is the victim of a kidnapping by the lizard men, the further details of which escape Dave Allen's memory.

In a later sequence, the pilot is standing in a vast field watching a giant ground sloth (a megatherium) from a distance, working like a beast of burden, clearing the field for cultivation. Suddenly, the lizard men attack viciously, and much to his horror he witnesses the death of a frightened villager. The pilot runs out of the field to a clearing and is joined by a Viking friend to search for his zeppelin. They eventually manage to find it, and use it to attack the city of lizard men, obliterating it with bombs. They nearly make it back to Europe in the ship when, as seen by eyewitnesses, it crashes and burns, the pilot-narrator the only survivor.

Back in the drawing room, his cohorts scoff at the story. Nobody will believe him. ("Hah, that's a good one—one too many, I'd say!") One of the men asks for some tobacco. As the narrator opens his desk drawer, we see that he has this artifact inside—the mummified hand of a lizard man used as an icon by the villagers to protect themselves against attacks. But he just takes the tobacco out, closing the drawer. He could have shown it to them if he wanted to, but you realize that he really doesn't want them to believe it anymore. "Judging from the look on his face," mused Allen, "one might suspect that he had hopes of going back again sometime to see the girl he met, or perhaps to prevent the island from being polluted by European influences!"

Top: The mummified hand of a lizard man as it is glimpsed by the camera when the narrator opens a drawer to get some tobacco at the conclusion of the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING presentation reel. Bottom: The Edwardian drawing room frame sequence: the character at left scoffs at the narrator's story while another pours a drink. The frame sequence was intended only for use in the presentation reel, and was not to be part of the actual film.





While the story lacked a certain amount of sophistication, Allen still recognizes its redeeming entertainment values and the rationale behind his initial surge of enthusiasm. In retrospect, it's not difficult to put into perspective. "RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was a much more fantasy-oriented story than what we have now. I had a really nice action sequence plotted out for the zeppelin/pterodactyl dogfight, with the reptiles tearing open the gas-filled envelopes. It was more like a STAR WARS entertainment experience, that kind of unreality. Whereas THE PRIMEVALS is more on the level of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. It's more heightened reality than fantasy, and much more psychological. The characterizations are integral to the plot and provide motivation for what takes place. RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was much more episodic; the action tended to happen *to* the characters. The lizard men were never really explained properly in the story. We're using the identical creatures in THE PRIMEVALS but they're presented in a more logical way. The Reptile City survives; so does the concept of an arena in the city, but the new story gives it a much more functional and dramatic significance."

Jim Danforth and Dennis Muren came up with some original story points for RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING which took the form of a twenty-page treatment. It contained no dialogue, just a detailed description of the story. In addition to that, Danforth began some artistic contributions. "I believe Jim did a painting of a lizard man ruler with a human captive," Allen recalled, "something that reminded me of another work that belonged to one of the heavyweight illustrators, Hogarth perhaps. He also started to design the lizard man and began to render it in clay, but then WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH came up and he went to England. That was the end of his involvement with the model. I was to carry on with his sculpture, but since there was so much work to

be done with the lizard men, I reworked it and then built them. The feeling was that if I had to go through with the whole thing, I would much rather do something of my own design. I think we had the idea that although anybody might be interested in the project when we were at the point of making a presentation, we had the thought that Cascade Pictures would be interested in producing it. In fact, they sniffed around at it quite a bit but never had the balls to make it, although they always used to talk about it."

In 1968, RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was a property in search of a studio. Enter Hammer Films. Their association with Allen would prove to be a source of immediate optimism, only to turn into a convoluted intrigue with depressing results.

Hammer had very high hopes for WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH, and they were very impressed with the work of Jim Danforth. As a result of this initial reaction, studio executives were enthusiastic about preparing a program of special effects pictures for production. A lot of Burroughs' works were being considered. The RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING treatment came to the attention of Hammer, possibly through Jim Danforth, and they liked it better than anything else they had been reading. Inquiries were then made by Brian Lawrence of Hammer in communiqués to David Allen, to discuss acquisition of the property. WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH was shooting at Hammer at this time, and Danforth had been working on it for about five or six months. Hammer's interest in RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING looked promising. But the studio soon began to get their own ideas.

During the time of his correspondence with Hammer, David Allen decided to make a short featurette on the property which would illustrate some of its highlights. "I had seen this presentation reel by Pete Peterson on THE LAS VEGAS MON-

"RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was a much more fantasy-oriented story than what we have now. It was like a STAR WARS entertainment experience—that kind of unreality. Whereas THE PRIMEVALS is more on the level of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. It's more heightened reality than fantasy and much more psychological. We're using the identical creatures in THE PRIMEVALS, but they're presented in a more logical way."

David Allen

STER. There was about 300 feet of animation in it but it didn't add up to anything. It was just a lot of effects; it didn't tell a story. You could see where it would not have moved an investor. Here was an example of some very first rate animation, and it was just *lying* there because it didn't have any drama. I felt that the way to make something like that come off the drawing board was to surround it with a concept and give it a *filmic framework*."

Allen's featurette was a very ambitious affair, to say the least. A lot of footage was shot (about 6000 feet) at a cost of several thousand dollars, and it probably would have edited down to twenty-five minutes. "The whole thing was like a mini-feature; it had a structure to it." Elaborate interiors were built and a group of actors were hired from a playhouse in Hollywood. On the technical end, Dennis Muren was a great help. He assisted Allen in photographing some planned perspective shots involving Viking tree huts, built in miniature by Tom Scherman. Tony Tierney fabricated the lizard man hand from Allen's drawing, and Bill Stromberg, later the producer of THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER, played one of the Viking villagers. Susan McGee, Jon Berg and Bill Hedge also helped out. Allen filmed all of the live action, and built quite

Filming special effects for the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING presentation reel in 1969. Top Left: The lizard man jumps into frame behind a fallen viking to retrieve its spear. Top Right: Filming the wounded Viking, played by Bill Stromberg, later the producer of THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER. Middle: A frame sequence illustrating the front light and back light matting technique used to composite the animation model with the live action in this scene. The matte is created on alternate frames by blasting out a black process screen with white light. The plywood support is obscured by a hand-painted glass matte (not shown here) conforming to the shape of Stromberg's body. Middle Right: Dennis Muren lines up the Viking tree-hut perspective shot while Dave Allen looks on. Bottom: The camera pans into an establishing shot of the Viking tree huts. The tree trunk in foreground hides the leg of the "iron man" supporting the miniature Viking village. Below Left: Dennis Muren, behind camera, films the sequence shown at left. This angle reveals the trick of perspective which creates the illusion that the miniature huts suspended before the camera are actually on the far shore. The panning camera motion provides added realism to the scene. Below Right: Tom Scherman's original art sketch dated 10/15/68 of the Viking tree huts, now implemented in THE PRIMEVALS as the habitat of man-ape Hominids.



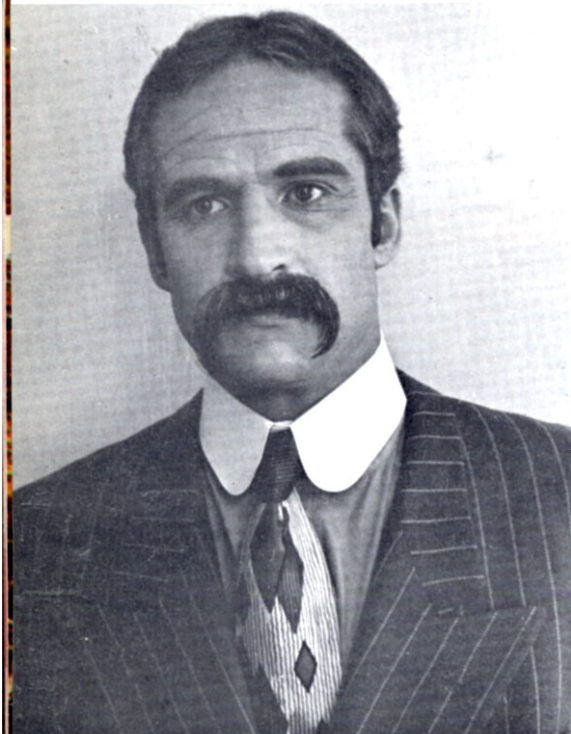
"By the time Hammer finished re-writing the story, I began to recognize my own apathy for the original RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING concept. It seemed too superficial. It had no substance. The Burroughs element was what I came to like least about it. I felt that Burroughs just didn't have enough intellect in his material to get my senses totally involved. He tended to deal in people who were too superlative, women who were too beautiful. I wanted my film to be real. I wanted it to be credible."

David Allen

a few of the puppets, but the presentation reel was never completed. "I had tons of composites to put together and never did it. I really bit off an awful chunk! Looking back, it was a very impractical thing to do. There was no script to speak of. I had shot plans and a flow chart which basically showed who the characters were and what happened to them. With a script and a little more investment, I probably would have been able to make the movie!" Without Allen knowing it, that was one of the things Hammer was afraid of.

Two of the effects scenes completed during the testing period for the demo reel were a shot of the Viking tree huts (a panning shot done in perspective) and a very well-rendered composite of a lizard man attacking Bill Stromberg. In the latter shot, Stromberg runs in from camera right with a spear in his back, stumbles, and falls down dead. At the same time, a lizard man jumps in from camera right, stands *behind* Stromberg, removes the spear from his back and, after a few furtive moves, runs out of frame. People who have seen this shot still marvel at it. "I didn't have a process pro-

The WWI war correspondent-adventurer.



jector at the time," Allen recalled fondly, "so I composited the lizard man onto the background footage with front light/back light mattes, which, incidentally, is the same procedure I intend to use for THE PRIMEVALS. In order to get the creature *behind* Stromberg, what had been created was a separate matte conforming to his body, almost like one would do in Dynamation. Once he falls down and dies, he goes into a held-still position. The matte was created by projecting a single frame trim of the same scene onto the miniature set and tracing it on glass. The way that was done was primitive at best, but it worked. I had Dennis Muren project the trim through my rack-over camera by holding a flashlight behind it. It was tricky as hell, because Dennis had a hard time holding the flashlight steady and the matte outline was hard to trace! Optical man Bill Taylor did a marvelous job during the printing stage. But to continue, the matte pops on in the middle of the scene which ordinarily isn't a very desirable thing to do. The lizard man jumps into frame during that instant creating a momentary distraction. Once the model is "behind" Stromberg, the spear in his back is replaced with a model spear. A funny thing happened, though. As soon as Stromberg fell down and the camera was locked off, a grip jumped in, unscrewed the spear, and jumped out again. Unfortunately, Stromberg's expression changed and you can see it if you're looking for it. But there were so many things going on in that shot, I'm still proud of it."

Dennis Muren shot the Viking tree hut miniature with an Arriflex, the only perspective shot in the test reel. The tentacular legs of the huts were supposedly tree trunks pulled together, then slathered over with mud and mortar. Tom Scherman's design had an organic, living look to it. Little doors, windows and ladders were added to the miniature by Scherman and Bill Stromberg for realism. "In the shot," says Allen, "you see an actor rush up to the edge of this ravine, and the camera pans with him as he's running. When he stops, the camera continues to pan until you see an establishing shot of the tree huts. My only criticism was that the huts should have been cantilevered out from the right as though they were on a diving board. But under the limited means at our disposal, we used an "iron man" which held the entire village up. Then we tried to cover up the iron man with a tree branch, which was undesirable. In fact, the *leg* of the table blended into the background! The size of the models was marginal. Had they been any smaller than they were, we would have been in big trouble. They were only thirteen inches tall. But the illusion was all there."

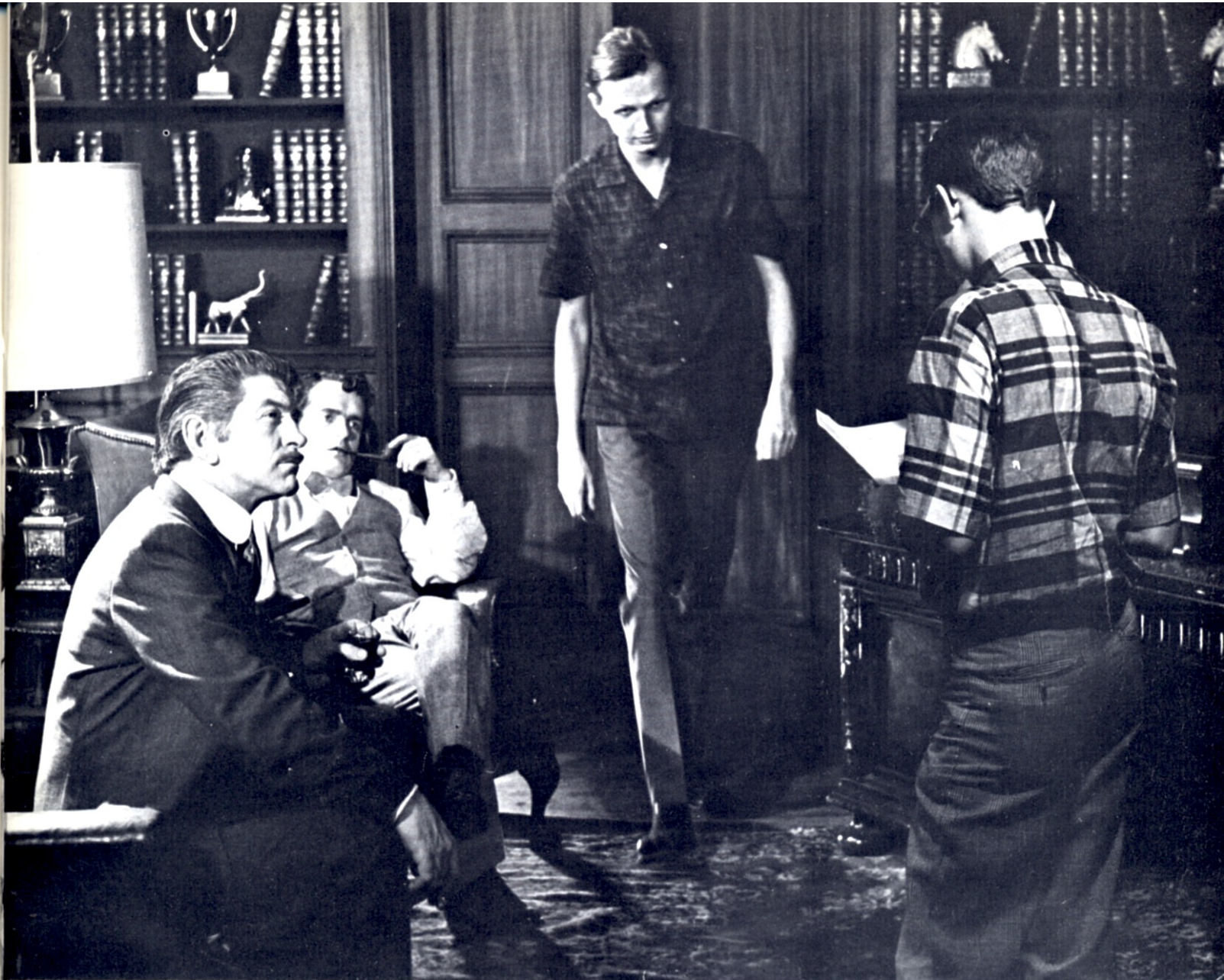
Back in England, things were brewing with the white shirts at Hammer who were trying to acquire RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING for filming, and were distorting its story to suit their own tastes in the process. Of great concern to Allen was Hammer's disillusionment with the whole stop-motion process as the work on WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH dragged on. Other factors came into view that caused Allen to consider selling the story outright to Hammer, thereby detaching himself from future developments, and to halt production on his presentation reel. "For one thing," recalled Allen, "Hammer

Right: Rehearsing the Edwardian drawing-room frame sequence from the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING presentation reel in 1969. Camera man Dennis Muren (center) and director David Allen (right) block-out the action in the scenario for the performers, members of a local Hollywood repertory company. Left: An unidentified actor as the Burroughs-style narrator-adventurer.

had already taken over reigns on it. They had rewritten the story to satisfy their own egos, I suppose, and it was just terrible. ZEPPELIN VS. PTERODACTYL they called it! Just for the record, I never found *anybody* who liked that title. It's so literal, so straight; it sounds like a label in a filing cabinet! You'd think that Hammer or whoever had a hand in that quackery of a concoction might've consulted someone else other than their own incestuous little group. A little poster was made and it appeared in the trades, mostly as a fund-raising tactic. Apparently when they dangled the poster in front of the American distributors, nobody snapped at it. Perhaps it had something to do with prejudice against stop-motion, I don't know. I'm really not in the position to explain exactly why the project eventually died. They didn't invite me into their smoke-filled rooms."

By far Hammer's most growing concern was the production of the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING presentation reel. It was something they couldn't understand as far as its purpose was concerned. When Hammer felt they were close to making a decision on buying the project, a meeting was arranged between Dave Allen and Sir James Carreras in California. The timing of this encounter is interesting in retrospect. "Oddly enough, the day we were filming the Viking hut village was the day that I went up to Beverly Hills to talk to Carreras about actually making the picture. Hammer was wondering why we were shooting this stuff and it was all very debilitating. Carreras had some really gross graffiti-type jokes. Either that kind of coarseness was his level of humor or he was just trying to warm me up, thinking I was one of the regular blue collar boys. He certainly didn't conduct himself like a Lord of the Realm!" There was no concrete outcome of the meeting. It only served to reinforce Allen's creeping cynicism about Hammer's attitude toward the project and his feeling of uneasiness that it was being manipulated by a certain ignorant elite.

Eventually, Allen and his associates sadly shut down production of the presentation reel. "It was probably good that I did," says Allen reflectively. "I was very naive then. I believed that if one demonstrated ability, that would more or less take the place of being well-connected. Logic told me that if I at least had a great-looking piece of film, I would have *no trouble* getting people to want to do it. But at times there is no logic to this business. What made me halt production was Hammer's inability to understand why I was doing the featurette at all. Being businessmen, they thought I might be constructing some sort of low-budget version of the project to compete with theirs. I'm just guessing. They were probably a bit frightened and a bit *puzzled* at what I was trying to do. Through Jim Danforth, they were basically saying to me: 'Why are you doing this? *We are going to make your picture!* Why are you throwing away your own money producing a



film that will never be used?' I had to admit that had a certain logic to it. I had every reason at the time, not being too wise in the ways of the business, to believe what they were telling me, that they *were* going to make the picture! So I shut down. And when I did that, the loss of momentum was something that could never really quite be regained.

"But it wasn't just a matter of stopping suddenly, only after many months of receiving these letters—how much do you want for this, who's going to do that, etc., did I realize that the project was almost certainly dead. Hammer's interest in the project began to ebb, and then went straight downhill. Slowly I came to the conclusion that they will *never* do the picture. Suddenly it's six months later and the project becomes part of the past because you're into something else now. It's not so easy then to pick up the pieces."

In an overview of the entire Hammer mess, Allen is able to put most of what happened in perspective now. "As I see it," he theorizes, "when the work on *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH* consumed more time than they had anticipated, they became disenchanted with animation in general. I think I can recall hearing

their claim that they couldn't get anyone in the States interested in distributing the idea. Also, I began to see that there might be some problems in developing a working relationship with Jim Danforth and Dennis Muren over a long period of time. I had lived with the project for so long, I was getting sort of set in my ways about how it should be done. There was a bit of squabbling. Nothing serious, just creative overlap.

"Then there was another reason for pulling out. By the time Hammer finished rewriting the story, I began to recognize *my own* apathy for the original *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING* concept. It all seemed too superficial. It had no substance. The Burroughs element was what I came to like least about it. It was sort of a pulp romance; I think that's one reason why I moved away from it. I felt that Burroughs just didn't have enough intellect in his material to get my senses totally involved. He tended to deal in people who were *too* superlative, women who were *too* beautiful. Many like that kind of material today and I respect that, but as I soon began to realize, I wanted my film to be *real*. I wanted it to be credible. Burroughs heroes are incredible. In that respect, I felt

that the original concept was just too juvenile for my own tastes.

"In 1968, I had been conceiving the *very beginnings* of what *THE PRIMEVALS* script is today. But in making suggestions to take the *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING* script in that direction, Hammer did not seem to comprehend any of it. They simply had their own banal ideas. Some of it reflected in their growing concern over the time Jim Danforth was consuming for the animation on *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*. They said something like 'We feel'—always the use of the anonymous corporate plural pronoun—'We feel that the film would be just as exciting if we had an enemy tribe wearing strange headgear.' And this is a quote from Brian Lawrence's letter, 'That the natives in strange headgear would be just as exciting as the lizard men, giant sloths, etc.' They were still stuck on the idea from *ONE MILLION B.C.*—one good tribe, one bad tribe. Harryhausen remade that film for them, and they were trying to use the formula again for *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*. They were even trying to bend *RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING* to that same formula, throwing out continued page 39

If Ray Bradbury is the reigning King of the literature of the fantastic, then Stephen King is the heir apparent to the throne. Among King's works are the immensely popular *'Salem's Lot*, *Carrie*, *The Shining*, and a collection of short stories entitled *Night Shift*. *Carrie*, of course, became Brian De Palma's spectacular film, while Kubrick is currently filming *The Shining*. Several of the stories in *Night Shift* will soon be adapted to the screen in not one, but two separate productions. In this exclusive interview, Stephen King discusses his past work, his inspirations, his attitudes toward the genre, and his future projects.

How did your fascination with the horror genre come about?

My "fascination with the horror genre" began with the E.C. comics of the early '50s—my generation's *National Enquirer*—

Lovecraft that I found in an aunt's attic. Lovecraft struck me with the most force, and I still think, that for all his shortcomings, he is the best writer of horror fiction that America has yet produced.

I was also thinking of Poe, and perhaps Oscar Wilde?

Neither Poe nor Wilde have influenced me particularly. Other than the horror/supernatural writers I've already mentioned, I would say Thomas Hardy, John D. MacDonald, and most importantly James M. Cain.

Do commercial considerations play a part in your writing?

Sure, I'm a commercial writer. I'd like to get filthy rich and own a yacht. But I write only to please myself, and to entertain myself. For me, my books are home movies.

Would you say there is a statement, or

from the unusual to the unnatural to the out-and-out unbelievable. It is, maybe, a TWILIGHT ZONE school of writing, but Serling and company weren't there first. A guy named Jack Finney was...the guy who originally wrote *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, on which Siegel's film was based. I hope Finney makes a million dollars on the movie tie-in this fall; he deserves it. They should have paid him a royalty on all those TWILIGHT ZONE stories like "The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street."

Religion, Christianity—for its embodiment you created Margaret White who is really the stereotypical religious fanatic. Are your feelings towards Christianity predominantly negative, or is your apparent anathema restricted to fundamentalism?

My feelings toward Christianity are neutral—I believe in God, but not necessarily in organized religion...although I will

"...synthesizes major elements of *Childhood's End* and *Lord of the Rings*."

Stephen King has a unique gift. Previously, he has taken the time-worn concepts of telekinesis, vampirism and possession and created superlative stories which are unequaled in their unique melding of terror with social and psychological insight. As in the case of his three earlier novels, King's latest book, *The Stand* (Doubleday hardcover, \$12.95) is one of the finest treatments of an established theme, specifically Apocalypse.

The annihilation of humanity is caused by a "superflu," a virus with a fatality rate of 99.4% that escaped a secret U.S. biological warfare installation. Unlike *The Andromeda Strain*, *The Stand* does not depict scientific attempts to arrest the epidemic. Instead, the effects of the plague are conveyed through the trials of a handful of people, inexplicably immune to the disease. They find the whole world literally dying around them. Their story, both touching and terrifying, is so gripping that perhaps another writer would be content to limit the narrative to these events. Yet King begins *The Stand* with the plague. The true horror is still to come.

The consciousness of the survivors has been altered. Their minds are linked by dreams that despite their individual variations share two aspects. One is the presence in an arid wasteland of the *Dark Man*, a faceless being inspiring overwhelming dread. The other vision is of a fertile Nebraska cornfield and a century old black woman, Mother Abigail. She is serene, reassuring and she tells the dreamers that if they need her, they can visit. And so people throughout the country are compelled on a quest for Mother Abigail: from Maine, Fran Goldsmith an unwed mother and teenage prodigy Harold Lauder; from

Texas, the quietly strong Stu Redman; from New York, pop singer Larry Underwood; and the rootless, deaf mute, Nick Andros. Mother Abigail seems to be good incarnate; but should they find her, they know that the *Dark Man*, the incarnation of absolute evil, must exist as well.

The Stand is more than excellent "horror fiction," it is superlative American fiction as well. The novel is marked by horror, wisdom, suspense and humor. King not only examines the workings of human consciousness, but also that of the collective consciousness which is society and specifically America. King is part of a great tradition of American storytellers and in *The Stand* he has created epic fiction, a mythology that synthesizes the major thematic elements of *Childhood's End* and *The Lord of the Rings*. But empathy sets King apart from "mainstream" writers (e.g., Updike, Cheever, Bellow) whose depictions of "society" and "the common man" are frequently self-conscious and pretentious. Ultimately, King's perception will prove to be the one of greater sensitivity and validity.

The major obstacle in filming *The Stand* will be the difficulty in dramatizing the psychological, moral and philosophical issues raised by the book. Without the intellectual *essence* of the novel, a film would degenerate into little more than a disaster picture. For that reason, King should insure that he write and produce any film version, to husband his work on the screen as Blatty did with *The Exorcist*. Any potential film notwithstanding, *The Stand* remains a monumental book, certainly one of the greatest works of horror and as of now, Stephen King's finest novel.

Peter S. Perakos



THE STAND

a novel by the author of
THE SHINING

STEPHEN KING

and with the horror movies of the '50s, most notably *THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON*, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* (I look forward to the coming remake with an odd mixture of dread and anticipation), *THE BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS* (which starred John Agar and was, in some way I've never been able to figure out, the basis for my novel *Carrie*), and later the AIP creature features, which remain interesting to me because the best of them (although none of them was really very good) involved teenagers and took off into horror from such mundane settings.

Which writers have influenced you the most?

In terms of reading, the early Bradbury played a part (although I did not discover him until my teens), the early Bloch, and a number of '40s paperback editions of

a point of view, common to your work? By statement I mean, if you excuse the term, "message."

The point of view in my works, the "pitch of concern," to put it a slightly different way, has been fairly constant in everything I've written over the last ten years or so, and probably won't change much in the future—it is the dead opposite of the writers most of us read in college, the "literary" writers, if you like (my definition of a "literary writer:" a novelist of whom no one ever asks, "Yes, but when are you going to do something serious?")...People like Doris Lessing, John Updike, Joyce Carol Oates, people like that. They do books about extraordinary people in ordinary situations, while I'm more fetched by the exact opposite...ordinary people in a pressure-cooker, in a crunch situation. Preferably one where events have skewed

qualify this by saying that, as a kid brought up in the mostly-lukewarm atmosphere of Methodism, I was always fascinated by the trappings and solemnity of Catholicism. Coincidentally (or maybe not) the only girl I was ever serious about in college was a Catholic, and the woman that I married is a Catholic—of the lapsed variety. The power of the Catholic Church plays an important part in *'Salem's Lot* partly because it felt so natural and right.

Why is it in your work, and in most works of the supernatural, the greater power belongs to evil, or the demonic, or the devil, while good or God is more or less passive?

In my own books, the power of God doesn't play a passive part at all. (Call it the power of White, if you prefer; sometimes I do, although the White concept is more pagan than Christian)...Good wins

STEPHEN KING

on CARRIE, THE SHINING, etc.

"As a moviegoer, I don't give a tin whistle what a director thinks; I want to know what he sees. Most directors have good visual and dramatic instincts, but in intellectual terms they are pinheads."

Stephen King

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INTERVIEW BY PETER S. PERAKOS

out over evil in *Salem's Lot* and *The Shining*, and at least earns a draw in *Carrie*. Anyhow, this whole question is very central to my new book, *The Stand*, and I direct your attention to that.

By the way, I also reject your contention that in *most* works of the supernatural, the power belongs to evil—short-run power, maybe, but check your *Dracula*, or (again) Finney's *Body Snatchers*, and a good many others (M. R. James, Coleridge, William Hope Hodgson, Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*...)

Do you consider yourself to be a religious person?

I'm religious in terms of the White, but I don't go to church. God and the devil—the White and Black forces—proceed from the *inside*—that's where the power comes from. Churches make morals, which, I suppose, is useful... So is Tupperware, in its way.

How would you respond to the comment that the lack of spirituality in society is a turning away from God, and consequently any alternative, which might deal with evil or the devil, is necessarily popular?

I don't think there's any lack of spirituality in today's society; I think there is a lack of focus because so many of the organized religions have begun to crumble in the latter half of the 20th Century... the Catholics are the most extreme case in point, of course, but the same is true all the way from Islam to Methodism. To some degree you can blame this on technology, but the other focus for spirituality these days is the fact that technology is gradually making itself obsolete—witness the wounded, what-did-we-ever-do-to-anybody attitude of many hard-core SF fans and writers. (The defense Niven and Pour-

nelle make of nuclear reactors in *Lucifer's Hammer* is bitterly laughable.) The same splendid technology that has pushed back the frontiers of "God's province" so rapidly since 1900 is also the technology that has given us the fluorocarbon spray can, CBW, and the threat of nuclear holocaust. Besides, people's spiritual lives always seem to fall into turmoil and the literature of the supernatural always becomes more prevalent (and more interesting) as the end of the century approaches. I don't know why it's so, but it is... you find your rationalists in the middle of the century, and your real good wars. This is a pretty wandering answer to your question, but it's the best I can do.

A major source of evil, indeed the primary source in Carrie, is human, not supernatural—her psychotic mother, sadistic teenagers. Even the Overlook's terror in

The *Shining* has a human origin, the monsters who lived and died in the hotel. What is your definition of evil?

My definition of evil is "the conscious will to do harm."

Then, do you feel that you are creating allegory in your novels?

Yes, my novels are sometimes allegorical in nature (or in effect), but—and I think Ray Bradbury would agree with this—for some reason I don't understand (although he may), almost all long-form horror fiction has a tendency to reverberate and to become allegorical. I think that's the main reason that neither horror novels nor films have ever been placed in a "genre" ghetto.

What did you think of Brian DePalma's *CARRIE*?

I liked DePalma's film of *Carrie* quite a bit. The attitude of the film was different from my book; I tended to view the events straight-on, humorlessly, in a straight point-to-point progression (you have to remember that the genesis of *Carrie* was no more than a short story idea), while I think DePalma saw a chance to make a movie that was a satirical view of high school life in general and high school peer-groups in particular. A perfectly viable point of view. Sissy Spacek was excellent, but right behind her—in a smaller part than it should have been—was John Travolta. He played the part of Billy Nolan the way I wish I'd written it, half-funny and half-crazy.

Also, in the book, *Carrie* destroyed the entire town on the way home; that didn't happen in the movie, mostly because the budget was too small. I wish they could have had that, but otherwise, I don't have any real quibbles. I think that DePalma is a worthy pretender to Hitchcock's throne... certainly he is as peculiar as Hitchcock.

In a review of *CARRIE* (and perhaps applicable to your book as well) Janet Maslin comments in *Newsweek*: "Combining gothic horror, offhand misogyny, and an air of studied triviality, *CARRIE* is DePalma's most enjoyable movie and also his silliest... alternating between the elegant and the asinine..."

I think that Ms. Maslin's comments on the film in her review are off the mark—or, to be a bit irreverent, I think she's full of shit. The movie—and the book—is not about "triviality" or "mysogyny" but in-groups and out-groups, The Wheels and The Outcasts. The gothic horror part is okay, but that, of course, is DePalma's homage to Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*, which seems a bit studied and overdone for my taste (Bates High School, for instance).

You might be consoled by the knowledge that Ms. Maslin no longer writes for *Newsweek*. The *Shining*—is it your most ambitious work?

I think *The Shining* is the most ambitious novel I've published to date, but the one which follows this October, *The Stand*, is a bit more ambitious... certainly I worked harder on it, although to whatever ultimate critical result yet remains to be seen.

Kubrick has a unique view, ostensibly Freudian, of the relationship of man to society. Are your views compatible?

Please believe me: nobody has a Freudian view of the relationship of man to his society. Not you, not me, not Kubrick, nobody. The whole concept is abysmally silly. And as a movie-goer, I don't give a tin whistle what a director thinks; I want to know what he sees. Most directors have

Stanley Kubrick films *THE SHINING* at EMI Elstree Studios in England.

Now into its sixth month of production, the filming of Stanley Kubrick's *THE SHINING* should be completed no later than January 1979 since Kubrick usually takes anywhere from eight to ten months to edit his films (working as much as eighteen hours a day, seven days a week). The release date has been set for December 1979. Working with Kubrick on the production, as assistant art director, is his daughter Vivian, who ten years earlier appeared as the little girl on the telephone in *2001*.

It is expected, because of the scope and potential of *THE SHINING*, that it will be Warner Bros big Christmas attraction next year, backed by a colossal advertising campaign that may rival the promotion of *SUPERMAN*. Additional changes have been made in the screenplay (7:3/7:4:74), which differs substantially from Stephen King's novel. These alterations do not necessarily reflect what the viewer will see in the finished film. Kubrick is well-known for deriving better ideas just before he would have gone ahead with his original concepts for a scene. Ultimately, the movie will reflect Kubrick's version of *The Shining* and no one else's.

The staid and gloomy Overlook Resort Hotel is being updated to a modern, less gothic, appearance. Kubrick is adding a shock sequence involving Danny in the resort's computer game room, as the machines come alive, threateningly, on their own. Kubrick has selected and gathered at EMI Elstree some two dozen of the most sophisticated electronic games by the world's leading manufacturers for the scene. In line with the Overlook's new ambience, Kubrick has done away with the the Roque court and is considering having Danny pursued through the corridors of the hotel by his mad father swinging—not a Roque mallet—but a baseball bat. It is undecided at this point whether the Overlook will, or will not, explode

(as it does in the book) at the film's conclusion. One ending under consideration has Jack Torrance freeze to death in the hedge maze, after Danny escapes, when he cannot find his way out. (As reported exclusively last issue, Kubrick has abandoned the concept of the hedge animals, which come to life in the King book, in favor of a hedge maze.)

The makeup for the ghost of the dead woman in room 217—which may be changed to room 237 for legal reasons—promises to be incredibly grisly. Kubrick is rumored to be shooting the animated rotting corpse only from the waist up. The concept for the makeup is being kept faithful to King's description in *The Shining*: "The woman in the tub had been dead for a long time. She was bloated and purple, her gas-filled belly rising out of the cold, ice-rimmed water like some fleshy island. Her eyes were fixed on Danny's, glassy and huge, like marbles. She was grinning, her purple lips pulled back in a grimace. Her breasts lolled. Her pubic hair floated. Her hands were frozen on the knurled porcelain sides of the tub like crab claws."

Makeup artist Christopher Tucker has been signed by Kubrick to create the makeup for the sequence. Tucker's most recent work can be seen throughout 20th Century-Fox's *THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL*. Tucker also assisted Stuart Freeborn in his preliminary work on *STAR WARS*.

Taking into consideration the acting abilities of Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall and Scatman Crothers, and Kubrick's proven ability to create cinematic masterpieces, *THE SHINING* could prove to be the most viscerally powerful horror film experience an audience was ever subjected to. It will be Kubrick's challenge to make it a great film as well.

Jim Albertson

good visual and dramatic instincts (most good directors, anyway), but in intellectual terms, they are pinheads, by and large. Nothing wrong in that; who wants a film director who's a utility infielder? Let them do their job, enjoy their work, but for Christ's sake, let's not see Freudianisms in the work of any film director. The only director who seems to have any psychological point of view at all is Ingmar Bergman, and his is Jungian, which is the next thing to saying "instinctual." Can you imagine Bergman doing *The Shining*? That would be interesting.

Despite your assertion that Kubrick does not have a Freudian viewpoint, it is rumored that he attempted to write and modify the script under the guidance of a psychiatrist. Kubrick has changed several elements of the novel, including your apocalyptic ending.

From the beginning, when I first talked to Kubrick some months ago, he wanted to change the ending. He asked me for my opinion on Halloran becoming possessed, and then finishing the job that Torrance started, killing Danny, Wendy, and lastly himself. Then, the scene would shift to the spring, with a new caretaker and his family arriving. However, the audience would see Jack, Wendy, and Danny in an idyllic family scene—as ghosts—sitting together, laughing and talking. And I saw a parallel between this peaceful setting at the end of the picture and the end of *2001* where the astronaut is transported to the Louis XIV bedroom. To me, the two endings seemed to tie together.

The ending of *2001* is a cosmic rebirth. Your description of Kubrick's proposed

ending for *THE SHINING* seems to show that what is after-or-beyond life is something which is neither terrifying nor horrible, but pastoral, mystical.

The impression I got from our conversation is that Kubrick does not believe in life after death. Yet, he thought that any vein of the supernatural story (whether it is horrifying, or whether it is pleasant) is inherently optimistic because it points towards the possible survival of the spirit. And I told him that's all very good as a philosophy, but when an audience is brought face to face with the slaughter of characters that they care about, then they will cry for your head once they go out of the theatre. But Kubrick has modified his original ideas extensively, so I don't expect to see this ending in the final film.

I also want to comment on the omission of the topiary animals. [7:3/7:4:74]. It's very funny to me that he chose a hedge maze, because my original concept was to create a hedge maze. And the reason that I rejected the idea in favor of the topiary animals was because of an old Richard Carlson film, *THE MAZE*. The story was about a maze, of course, but in the middle of the maze was a pond. And in the middle of the pond, on a lily pad, was grandfather who was a frog. Every night, grandpa turned into a frog and so they had to put him into the pond. To me, that was ludicrous. So I abandoned the idea of a hedge.

It is disappointing—the alleged effects problems notwithstanding—that the hedge animals have been dropped.

I never really thought that the topiary animals would make it to the film, anyway. The director would face a dual risk, the

"When I first talked to Kubrick some months ago, he wanted to change the ending. He asked me for my opinion on Halloran becoming possessed, and then finishing the job that Torrance started, killing Danny, Wendy and lastly himself. Then, the scene would shift to the spring, with a new caretaker and his family arriving. However, the audience would see Jack, Wendy and Danny in an idyllic family scene—as ghosts—sitting together, laughing and talking."

Stephen King

The Shining
by
Stephen King

The Shining by Stephen King

Dave Christensen's cover illustration for the hardcover book, showing Wendy, Jack and Danny Torrance against the motif of the Overlook, showing the hedge animals and a Roque mallet.



Doubleday

A new novel
by the
author of
CARRIE
and
'SALEM'S LOT

first being that the effect would not look real. The second risk is that even if the effect *does* look real, the audience might laugh. These are problems facing the filmmaker, problems I didn't have to contend with writing the novel.

There is a great deal of graphic horror in The Shining—actually in all your works. Do you feel this makes them difficult to adapt as films?

Yes, violence is dynamite. It's a dangerous package to handle. It is all too easy to let violence dominate. A lot of good directors have floundered on that particular rock. And that's one of the reasons I like Don Siegel, because he handles violence well. I would have preferred Siegel to direct THE SHINING, or perhaps 'SALEM'S LOT. I believe he would be very successful directing 'SALEM'S LOT.

What do you think of the casting for THE SHINING? Does it fit with the characteristic of your work: ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances?

I'm a little afraid of Jack Nicholson as Jack Torrance in that context because he is not an ordinary man. So far as I know, he's never played an ordinary man and I'm not sure that he can. I would have rather seen Michael Moriarty or Martin Sheen portray Torrance. But these actors are not supposed to be "bankable"—Hollywood loves the word.

What do you think about Shelley Duwall cast in the part of Wendy Torrance?

That's an example of absolutely grotesque casting... But Kubrick is certainly an inventive, thinking director. He is one of the three or four greatest directors of our day, maybe of all time. However, I think

he is indulgent, terribly indulgent. CLOCKWORK ORANGE just doesn't hold up today. Some of his other films do. (It's amazing that any film does. A statement of genius is the ability of a film to hold up ten years from now.) I think DR. STRANGE-LOVE and 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY do. And BARRY LYNDON will. But even if his film of *The Shining* is an artistic failure, it will probably be a commercial success... And even if it's a failure, it will be an interesting failure... Anyway, you have to realize I'm only talking as an interested observer. I'm not a participant.

What about the possibility of you directing several of the stories in Night Shift for Milton Subotsky?

Subotsky has six of the stories in *Night Shift*; he offered me both the chance to screenwrite and to direct. I'd like to direct very much, but I'm scared of that—not the conceptualization or visualization, but trying to control a big crew, all of whom have forgotten more about movie-making than I'll ever know. Also, I'm primarily a writer. I declined the chance to direct—reluctantly—and just for now.

What is the status of bringing 'SALEM'S LOT to the screen?

CBS is interested in adapting 'Salem's Lot as a "Novel For Television," but the Standards and Practices people, the censorship bureau, have raised fifty or sixty objections, creating a problem which I feel is insurmountable. But, that's okay. Warner Bros bought it; they paid for it. So, in a way, it's the best of both possible worlds, as I'd rather not see it made at all.

Can you tell us anything about your script for 20th Century-Fox and NBC?

I've adapted three of the stories in *Night Shift*. Those are "I Know What You Need," "Battleground," and "Strawberry Spring." The film is being produced by a production company which is called, appropriately, The Production Company. The producers are Mike Wise and Frank Leavy. They like the screenplay. And if it were five years ago, I could confidently say that the movie would be immediately produced and on the air by next March. But I can't say that because the climate of TV production is now so tight towards anything that has to do with horror or violence. "Strawberry Spring," which is a latter day Jack The Ripper story, is of course violent. NBC Standards and Practices called me and said, "We can't have this lunatic running around stabbing people to death." And I said, "Well, that kind of shoots the story down, doesn't it?" And NBC replied, "Oh, no! Stabbing is out, but he can strangle them." So, either they're afraid of showing blood or alluding to ritual penetration.

What is the possibility of your new novel, The Stand, being developed for filming?

The Stand will be shown around Hollywood. And if the book is very, very successful, it might be sold. But I don't think, because of its complexity, that it will ever be sold.

Finally, how do you feel about your novels and stories being transformed, by others of varying capabilities, into films?

I am pleased that all the people involved are very good in what they're doing. But, ultimately, they can't mutilate anything that I wrote because the writing will stand on its own, one way of another. □

MARTIN

"Romero has done more for the genre on a conceptual level, than the past two decades of vampire movies."

MARTIN A Libra Films Release. 1/78. In Color. 95 minutes. A Laurel Group Presentation. Written and directed by George A. Romero. Produced by Richard Rubenstein. Director of photography, Michael Gornick. Music composed and arranged by Donald Rubenstein. Edited by George A. Romero. Sound, Tom Buba. Special effects and makeup, Tom Savini. Associate producers, Patricia Bernesser, Ray Schmaus. Financial services, Barney C. Guttman. Legal services, Goldberg and Snodgrass. Titles by The Animators.

Martin John Amplas
Cuda Lincoln Maazel
Christina Christine Forrest
Mrs. Santini Elayne Nadeau
Arthur Tom Savini
Housewife Victim Sarah Venable
Train Victim Fran Middleton
Lewis Al Levitsky

Apart from the Count Yorga films, which were enjoyable nonsense, modern-day vampire tales seldom work. It is almost as if the conception, born in legend and folk myths and first refined in 19th Century British literary styles, cannot stand being brought into the sunlight of our familiar 20th Century life, in which elements of our own existence, from Nixon to Kiss, are often as commonplace-bizarre as the furthest nightmare visions of a 19th Century mind. Added to that is the fact that no other genre character than the vampire is so hamstrung with an ancient set of inviolable conventions that determine his life and death. Nevertheless, George Romero, relying not so much on enigma as on tight thematic juxtapositions, has brought off just such a tale in admirable fashion in MARTIN.

MARTIN is a breakthrough film for Romero. The major weaknesses of his films have been erratic acting and literal-mindedness, but in MARTIN he gives us a set of interesting, well-written characters, each of whose individ-

by David Bartholomew

ual plight echoes back on the others. Not surprisingly for a vampire film, MARTIN's major theme is the quest for freedom, introduced in the initial sequence, a harrowing train ride in which Martin, a callow, nondescript youth, claims his first victim, who is seen, bored, reading B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*.

As portrayed by John Amplas (an actor of limited regional stage experience whom Romero spotted in Pittsburgh), Martin is a fascinating, complex character, the first such successfully attempted in any of Romero's (released) films. Amplas uses sullen stares and silences to great effect, and he and Romero have collaborated to create in Martin a sustained blend of intellectual and emotional stuntedness (in the early scenes, to the point of possible retardation) and innocence, similar to David Provost's NUNZIO, who sought to escape a reality he couldn't understand by fantasizing himself Superman. Martin has no such alleviating fantasies.

He strains to break through the harsh existence imposed by his grandfather, Cuda (ironically, for Romero, by profession a butcher—Lincoln Maazel), who has brought Martin to live in his home also shared by his granddaughter (Christine Forrest). As in NUNZIO, one possible escape route, or emergence into more mature understanding, is through the achieving of normal sex, which Martin is unable psychologically to attempt. Martin's periodic "shakes," slowly intensifying until relieved, parallel an addict's withdrawal from drugs, and they are carefully allied by Romero with his vampirism (and here, Romero has done more for the genre on a conceptual level than the past two decades of vampire movies). On his forays, Martin arms himself with modern technology: he injects his (female) victims with a knockout drug, then while opening their veins and drinking blood, has sex with their inert bodies. The plot is thus Freudianized (which Hammer first connected to the vampire film), and on a psychological level, it posits Martin as stuck in pathological

masturbatory behavior to which the need to drink blood may indeed be secondary to the satisfaction of his sexual drive, here expressed in necrophelia. Martin's salvation, at least a passage to openness, lies in normal sexual fulfillment. And when it occurs, with a conscious, caring woman, late in the film, as Martin is semi-seduced by a randy housewife (Elayne Nadeau) whose earlier advances terrified him, Martin is freed. The freedom is momentary; when Martin instinctively returns to her, not so much for sex as simply to talk, and discovers her dead body in the tub, a suicide (and Romero again hits us with irony, as the bloody violence is the end point of Martin's usual activity with his "lovers"), he is once again doomed. In fact, Nadeau's death seals his doom and speeds Cuda to eventual action, as he believes Martin has killed her. Again ironically, it is the only death in the film that Martin is not directly responsible for.

To the extent of a CLOCKWORK ORANGE, Romero superbly twists audience sympathies regarding Martin. He is introduced at his worst, in his attack on the train victim, but our feelings are tempered by the more we learn of his past and present. Cuda is a harsh, unyielding, emotionally dead old man. If Martin is *perhaps* crazy, Cuda is crazy. A figure of absolute tradition, Cuda has no doubts as to Martin's being a vampire and surrounds him in the house with mirrors, crucifixes and bunches of garlic. Yet as he does for all the characters, Romero provides Cuda with positive traits; he is after all acting within his own heart-felt beliefs, and as the last remaining family member, he has taken Martin on as a direct responsibility. The apparent central question of the film: is Martin really a vampire, or is he only surrogately addicted to blood as a concomitance of his sexual acts, becomes, like a true MacGuffin, totally meaningless by the picture's end.

Martin is at first incommunicative, only after a while able to speak haltingly, like one coming out of shock. Cuda refers to his

affliction as "magic," in the old sense (Magick), but Romero interestingly has Martin a devotee of dime-store parlor magic. The first real communication between Martin, Cuda and Christina occurs at the dinner table when Martin performs the simple trick. (Earlier we had seen him secretly setting it up and suspected that he may be poisoning the others.) The installation of the telephones (which Cuda opposes) is another symbol of the desire for communication; for Christina and Martin they are a non-intimidating link to the outside world. Just as it is only during the performance of the simple sleight-of-hand trick that Martin is animated, his behavior "normal," so it is only over the phone, where the talker and listener cannot see each other, that Martin can speak fluently (like Roberts Blossom and his CB radio in CITIZEN'S BAND), even if his conversations are limited to the late-night radio talk show host, who cares about Martin only in as much as his bizarre monologues intrigue and build his listenership. For Martin, the telephone is ultimately a dead end, through which his words themselves, twisted by the glib d.j., inhibit any kind of communication.

But if Martin is trapped by his entire existence (or if you prefer to believe Cuda, his heritage), every other character in the film is similarly trapped in a hopeless web, mostly of their own weaving. Romero has never before captured so succinctly the lower middle class ambience of his characters: their dreary physical surroundings, the absolute banality of their lives, their cut-off emotions and nonexistent life-goals. They are dying as surely as the town is around them. Each character mirrors Martin in his plight. Cuda hasn't advanced beyond his youth and life in "the old country;" age has not wizened him, he's dead on his feet, restricted by traditions that have no validity in America. Christina, his granddaughter, has suffered by being reared by him. She has a nothing job, is expected to housekeep and cook for Cuda until his death, and by that time, she'll be withdrawn and unable to move. The house, which she'll probably inherit, has become her prison, and later will be a tomb. Her boyfriend Arthur (played by special effects ace Tom Savini) is asleep, a working class youth whose very appearance indicates his mentality. He has no discernable goals beyond a union job, decent home (Cuda's, most likely—Arthur is a one-generation-later version of Cuda), wife and kids, beer in the refrigerator. The two women Martin takes up with in the film—Nadeau and Sarah Venable, Martin's second victim—are both smothered in their homes (the only activity we see them both do is dreary supermarket shopping) and carry on (implied) loveless sexual affairs. No character in the film escapes this deadening constriction. Even the blatant d.j. is confined to the small oblong box (the radio—we never actually see him) and the gang of toughs (mirroring the local street kids who taunt Martin),

Martin (John Amplas, left), dons plastic fangs and a cape to scare Cuda (Lincoln Maazel, right) who believes he is a real vampire, a nosferatu, and tries to ward him off with a crucifix and other holy symbols.



with whom Martin accidentally becomes entangled, are quickly surrounded by police and captured or killed. (Ironically, their entrapment and resulting gun battle serve to allow Martin to escape his pursuers.)

The theme is further carried through in the film's tight, airless settings: the opening train compartment, Cuda's house and tiny shop, the crowded garage/warehouse where the gang is captured, the housewives' bedrooms, and at the end, the sharp-edged grave into which the camera zooms. Even to breathe seems an impossible task in such claustrophobic surroundings.

Technically, Christina is allowed by Romero to escape, but she does so without illusions or much hope. She browbeats Arthur to take her away, knowing that she is only using him to leave Cuda. It seems likely she'll be back. Like Martin, her future has been decreed by her past, i.e. she hasn't one, and she can only flee temporarily an intolerable present. As for Martin, well, his escape, at the point of Cuda's self-righteous stake, is death (but note it is *not* that of the commonplace vampire picture: death as true, welcome death and final release from endless suffering).

Romero's plotting functions as a series of oppositions and reversals, with the individual sequences tautly drawn (reminding us once again just how splendid an editor Romero is). They often obliterate real time as a characteristic of obsession. One sequence perfectly illustrates Romero's styling: Martin's night-time stalking of the second housewife (Venable) who earlier in the day he watched sending her husband (Richard Rubenstein, Romero's producer) off on a business trip. The sequence is mostly without dialogue, as Romero painstakingly follows Martin watching the house, entering by the garage, preparing the hypodermic, then springing into the 2nd floor bedroom, only to find Venable in bed with a lover. In an uncannily remarkable move by Romero, at that point, after the grueling, slow suspenseful build-up, we ally ourselves with Martin in his utter surprise, and taking it a step further, his feelings of *betrayal* that she should not be alone. The sequence then explodes into a trio of differing confusions, as each character, overcoming their shock, separately attempt to follow through on an action: Venable in calling the police, the man in finding Martin, who has fled downstairs, and Martin in preparing to drug now two people. Romero quickly cuts between the three, capturing especially well an unnerving sense of growing panic (particularly in Venable's behavior). Martin finally subdues them, and the pace slackens purposely as Romero forces us to watch once again Martin's inevitable acts which we know so well. A measure of Romero's success with this sequence (and with MARTIN overall) is that we continually face the question of whether we really want Martin to fail or to be caught and destroyed. □

The above sequence, with its perfectly sustained suspense, also notably illustrates Romero's characteristic, nearly patented ability to blend gory violence (and destruction of the victims) and humor (the lover locked outside the house in his pajamas). It is important to stress that Romero has lost none of his outrageous sense of humor in MARTIN. Although he has stated that he is happy to continue working in Pittsburgh, he introduces the city's pallid skyline in MARTIN over a giant mud puddle. A second later, the steel mill stacks billow huge clouds of black smoke over the landscape, as if to signal Martin's arrival in town (he borrows here from Hitchcock's SHADOW OF A DOUBT). Other instances concern the priest (jovially played by Romero), who presides over a "ruined" church, visiting Cuda's house and accepting glass after glass of wine, scoffing at Cuda's demon beliefs, and commenting on THE EXORCIST ("I thought it was great!") Romero has fun with vampire-movie lore as well; in one scene, out of a swirling fog, Martin, sporting a black cape and plastic fangs, terrorizes Cuda, then denounces the old man, feebly holding out a crucifix for protection, and his beliefs in Martin's vampirism ("It's not magic"). This is the same sort of vampire-movie image that the facile d.j. responds with in talking to Martin over the phone (and airwaves).

Nor has Romero lost his talent for blood-pounding grisliness: the first sequence on the train—a masterpiece of cutting and sound—the aforementioned Venable sequence and the confused night-time gun-battle between the gang and the police (in which Martin, ironically, is surrounded by blood not of his own doing). In MARTIN, however, the blood and violence are heightened by emotion, because it involves carefully developed characters.

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD was a much simpler film than MARTIN, which goes off on interesting thematic tangents. But that simplicity, operating on a simple dramatic curve, a spiraling nightmare, made for a nearly perfectly achieved film. MARTIN is more thoughtful, but not as single-mindedly successful. Martin's "period" flashbacks, printed in black-and-white and evoking '30s Universal horror films, in which Martin "learns" about his past life, fortell his doom in a nearly fictionalized manner (history repeats itself), but they are unevenly filmed and incorporated into the film. Much of Tony Buba's sound recording is unsatisfactory, rendering too much of the dialogue unintelligible, and Michael Gornick's images are muddy, as if the film was shot in low-light 16mm and blown up (it was not). Even Romero's old bugaboo, uneven acting, is occasionally in evidence.

Still, apart from its surprising technical deficiencies, MARTIN, with its multiple, layered ironies and sharp detailing, is a complex achievement. It is an important film both for Romero and the genre. □



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An Ovian insect creature from the premiere episode.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

"... a no-hitter in terms of grace, style, or wit. . ."

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA An ABC-TV Series. Premiere 9/17/78. In Color. 50 minutes (Premiere episode: "Saga of a Star World," 150 minutes). Sunday, 8:00 EDT. Executive producer and creator, Glen A. Larson (Universal Television). Supervising producer, Leslie Stevens. Producer, John Dykstra. Directed by Richard A. Colla. Teleplay by Glen A. Larson. Special effects coordinator, John Dykstra. Music composed and conducted by Stu Phillips. Played by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Theme by Glen A. Larson and Phillips. Director of photography, Ben Coleman. Costume designer, Jean-Pierre Dorlaec.

Capt. Apollo . . . Richard Hatch
Lt. Starbuck . . . Dirk Benedict
Adama . . . Lorne Greene
Lt. Boomer . . . Herb Jefferson
Athena . . . Maren Jensen
Cassiopea . . . Laurette Spang

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA takes that misunderstood genre, science fiction, another great plodding step backwards. How sad it is that, thirsting for the science fiction fix the 1970's keeps promising to deliver, I align myself as a viewer of **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA** because it is *all* there is to watch. Television has nearly killed-off the genre single-handedly with a stream of nitwit offerings from **THE STARLOST** to **EXO-MAN**.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA is one film I'd be tempted to say never gets off the ground; but, in all fairness, it was never meant to fly. *The* science fiction event to rival **STAR WARS** consists of discarded sf bromides and cheesy B-movie stereotypes, all put through a corporate meatgrinder, and dolled out in TV dinner portions. This night at the space opera

packed in a whopping 40-share audience in its premiere slotting, following a brief stint in Canadian theatres (although its ratings in following segments were not as impressive). But how can anyone take this seriously? The same yup-yups who found their addiction lay with **STAR WARS** are just getting more of the same; the pulp fanatics can have it all. **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA** surely helped enliven ABC-TV's "Fall Premiere Week" (an annual orgy of bad taste), but it played a no-hitter in terms of grace, style, or wit.

Admittedly, the plot has a nice Homeric thread: humanity, driven from an obliterated solar outpost by a robot race called Cylons, searches for a legendary planet called Earth, where permanent refuge from the Cylons may be found. Naturally, a story that can be summed-up in one sentence won't suffice for a two-hour plus movie. When someone asks guilt-stricken commander Adama (Lorne Greene), "where is Earth?" he replies, in mock-Shakespearean oratory, "I don't know... somewhere out there..." This script crutches along spinelessly, unable to tell a simple story simply, trembling from a lack of imagination, drowning in a sea of unintentional humor. The Cylons, decked-out in Reynolds Wrap armor and talking with the voice of Colossus from **THE FORBEN PROJECT**, are stock villains playing stock villain games.

I agree there is a need for escapist entertainment, when offered as **STAR WARS** was, unintelligent, undemanding, but breezy. However, **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA** tries to be Realistic and Serious. Random social relevance pops in; the Galactica fleet's community is glimpsed as to rank and order—Uri's (Ray Milland) phony

by Jeffrey Frentzen

decadence vs. the hull's starved masses; Greene's inability to cope with his leader image is examined, then dropped. There is an oblique reference to sexuality, when Starbuck subdues an all-too-willing mate by sticking his phallic che-root in her face, and ostensibly sacks her offscreen. But crucial dramatic junctures, situations begging for clarification, are played for cheap laughs, in a lot of throwaway bits: the Android Sisters, multi-mandibular disco cuties, an intergalactic storage company ("we move anywhere"), or worst of all, the furry pet "Muffet," a robot looking something like a teddy bear with muscular dystrophy.

John Dykstra's effects do not stand clear of the plot's ravaging, but still emerge as the film's only virtue. Natural law is frequently ignored (fiery exhausts and twinkling stars in the vacuum of space?), which Glen Larson asserts was an effort to "make space more accessible to the Midwest," whatever that means. Despite this heavy-handedness, Dykstra still comes out on top. Composite work is glossy and professional; the models are designed for detail (the Cylon Base Ship is masterful, and, though seen briefly here, will turn up more often in successive installments).

Oddly, the theatrical release print available in Canada was missing some important scenes: Adama's plan to send stand-in pilots to the Oviaan casino was absent, as were the epilogue showing Baltar's reprieve by the Cylon council (in the feature version Baltar was killed), and some narration played throughout the first hour.

The second episode, a two-part, was mercifully toned-down, but lost out to a script that took on several plots and developed none of them. The fourth show, set in a celestial cow-town, was abysmal. And as we continue along with Greene and his interstellar nurds, will we find any refuge from BATTLESTAR GALACTICA's unending rape of drama? Will they ever find the lost planet Earth? Or will they justifiably lose their bearings and run out of gas, left to disintegrate amidst the silent void that spawned them? Stay tuned, as they say, but don't hold your breath. □

Boxey (Noah Hathaway) and Muffet, a furry robot pet.



ISLAND OF THE DAMNED

"...the horror is of a contemporary, perverted ordinariness that tingles the spine with apprehension."

ISLAND OF THE DAMNED An American - International Pictures Release. 11/77 (c76). In Eastman-color. 104 (110) minutes. Produced by Manuel Perez (Penta Films, S. L., Madrid). Directed by Narciso Ibanez Serrador. Screenplay by Luis Penafiel based on the novel "The Game" by J. J. Plans. Director of photography, Jose Luis Alcaine. Sets, Ramiro Gomez. Music by Waldo de los Rios. Edited by Juan Serra and Antonio Ramirez.

Tom Lewis Fiander
Evelyn Prunella Ransom
With: Antonio Iranzo, Marisa Porcel, Miguel Narros, Maria Luisa Arias.

Since first released in Europe in 1976 as **WHO CAN KILL A CHILD?**, this AIP release, shorn here of six minutes of its more explicit horror, has garnered a host of awards and mixed critical reception: Italian critics called the film "communist;" German reviewers labeled it "facist."

Director Narciso Ibanez Serrador makes a conscious attempt with the film to raise the quality of Spanish horror films, and succeeds admirably. No newcomer to horror, Serrador directed **THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED** in 1971, a nice exercise in psychological horror, also released by AIP. In **ISLAND OF THE DAMNED**, the horror is of a contemporary, perverted ordinariness that tingles the spine with apprehension. No shock cuts or trashy gore is evident. Instead, a restrained directorial hand works with a feeling for creating a disturbing and terrifying atmosphere.

When Tom (Lewis Fiander) and his very pregnant wife, Evelyn (Prunella Ransome), decide to go to the remote island of Almanzora, near the Balearics, they discover a place full of children but seemingly no adults. A hostile reaction from one particular child when asked questions unnerves

by Alan Jones

JAWS 2

"The only horror of the picture is that it cost around \$20 million."

JAWS 2 A Universal Release. 6/78. 123 minutes. In Technicolor. Produced by Richard D. Zanuck, David Brown. Directed by Jean-no Szwarc. Screenplay by Carl Gottlieb, Howard Sackler, based on characters created by Peter Benchley. Director of photography, Michael Butler. Edited by Neil Travis. Music by John Williams. Production designer, Joe Alves. Stunts, Ted Grossman.

Brody Roy Scheider
Ellen Brody Lorraine Gary
Mayor Murray Hamilton
Peterson Joseph Mascolo
Hendricks Jeffrey Kramer
Dr. Elkins Colin Wilcox
Tina Ann Dusenberry
Mike Mark Gruner
Andrews Barry Coe
Old Lady Susan French

JAWS 2 is a dismal sequel in-
by David Bartholomew



Prunella Ransom and Lewis Fiander flee, the last two adults alive on a remote island where children have inexplicably murdered everyone.

them, but it's not until they witness a little girl battering an old man to death with his walking stick that the full horror explodes. Discovering an injured parent in their deserted hotel's attic, they learn that, for no apparent reason, the children just suddenly rebelled and went on the rampage killing every adult in sight. Realizing that it will soon be their turn, Tom and Evelyn flee across the island in a jeep but find themselves surrounded by the children. In desperation, they barricade themselves in the local police station. A little boy is shot as he tries to enter the cell and pull a gun on them, and this action provides, not a truce, but a breathing space for Tom to collect his wits. It is here that the first of two plot twists is introduced. Suffice it to say that the movie's climax owes **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** a certain debt.

There are so many good scenes in the film: the German tourist hiding in the Post Office desperately telephoning out to anyone who will answer, but when Tom

deed, Bruce the mechanical shark has been written about and become so well known that his appearances in the film lack any sort of believability whatsoever; what we are looking at is just that, a *mechanical shark*, not a ferocious beast but an engineering marvel—and it kills the film.

The movie had many production problems, chief among them the original director John Hancock departing after 3 weeks' shooting, necessitating tossing out most of the screenplay written by him and wife Dorothy Trislan from yet a *third* version, a "first draft" by Howard Sackler. No one is talking about the "why" of it, although co-producer David Brown has stated that Hancock wanted "a moody, Gothic-mystery approach to the film in contrast to the realistic one envisioned by the producers." Anyway, in the final screenplay by Sackler and Carl Gottlieb, "realistic" it's

does, her hopes vanish as he can't understand a word she's saying; the chilling game the children play with an inverted corpse—after the body is hung up, the children, blindfolded, take turns to try and cut the head off with a scythe; Evelyn, still not in full grasp of the situation, swerving the jeep as Tom tries to run a gang of children down; the childish inquisitiveness that leads to the mutilation of a female corpse; the injured parent lured to his death by his daughter's lies about her sister being ill.

The harrowing credit titles of the film (cut by AIP from the U.S. release), showing child victims of war and famine, offer an explanation as to why the children are acting so ruthlessly. It's a trifle glib, but then, no explanation is really necessary. Also, given the question posed by the original title, and the circumstances, surely one would lose no time in answering, "Me!" But that is the magic of Serrador at work—he doesn't give you time to take a breath, let alone ponder such questions. □

not. The first half of the film, featuring a myriad of interchangeable teenagers, looks like a Crown International youth picture (cf. **MALIBU BEACH**, which incidentally uses a throw-out JAWS-y shark attack conclusion). There are absolutely no shades of the thematic precision and subtlety that Spielberg brought to the first film, and there are only merely annoying echoes, like phantom memories, of Verna Fields' masterful editing in Neil Travis' hatchet job.

JAWS 2 is a lumpy movie, its sequences slack, drawn out and predictable beyond patience. Jean-not Szwarc, a TV director who made a stylistically grisly feature debut with **BUG**, a very much undervalued horror film for Paramount, was brought in to replace Hancock, but he seems to have been swallowed up. The only horror of the picture is that it cost around \$20 million to make. □

HEAVEN CAN WAIT

"...part of the trend of the seventies to find spiritual consolation outside of the traditional avenues."

HEAVEN CAN WAIT A Paramount Pictures Release. 6/78. In Color by Movielab. 100 minutes. Produced by Warren Beatty. Directed by Beatty and Buck Henry. Screenplay by Beatty and Elaine May based on the play by Harry Segall. Executive producers, Howard W. Koch, Jr. and Charles H. Maguire. Director of photography, William A. Fraker. Editors, Robert C. Jones, Don Zimmerman. Music by Dave Grusin. Production design, Paul Sylbert. Art direction, Edwin O'Donovan. Set decoration by George Gaines. Sound, John K. Wilkinson, Tommy Overton. Costumes and wardrobe by Theodora Van Runkle, Richard Bruno, Mike Hoffman and Arlene Encell.

Joe Pendleton . . . Warren Beatty
 Betty Logan . . . Julie Christie
 Mr. Jordan . . . James Mason
 Max Corkle . . . Jack Warden
 Tony Abbott . . . Charles Grodin
 Julia Farnsworth . . . Dyan Cannon
 The Escort . . . Buck Henry
 Detective . . . Vincent Gardenia

The current popularity of big budget motion pictures which feature lavish production values and stunning visual effects might cause one to forget that *cinéfantastique* is a genre whose most striking aspect is an inherent ability to develop ideas, ideas concerning human nature. HEAVEN CAN WAIT is a witty fantasy which examines what it means to be human, the inevitable complications that arise from living, loving, and dying. The last-dying-is the reason for much consternation on the part of quarterback Joe Pendleton (Warren Beatty). His greatest dream is to lead his team to victory in the Superbowl, undaunted by a recent knee injury or the strength of the opposing teams. But his dream is cut-short when he dies needlessly in a freak accident, taken before his time was due by a bumbling celestial Escort (co-director Buck Henry). Archangel Mr. Jordan (James Mason) makes amends by returning Joe to earth in the body of billionaire industrialist Leo Farnsworth, newly murdered by his adulterous wife Julia (Dyan Cannon) and her lover, Farnsworth's secretary Tony Abbott (Charles Grodin). Joe accepts the new body only after seeing the lovely Betty Logan (Julie Christie), who has come to try to prevent Farnsworth from building a refinery that would destroy her village in England. And so, Joe Pendleton, ignorant but well-meaning jock, becomes Leo Farnsworth, megalomaniacal tyrant. The audience sees, as does Joe himself, his true "inner spirit," and most of the humor arises from the supernatural role reversal.

Rest assured that if the plot is at best ridiculous, Beatty handles the story as co-author and co-director without being the least bit self-conscious (this is just the kind of material TV would run into the ground). Beatty seems to respect, understand and enjoy the genre; the supernatural is not dealt with facetiously, for although it may

by Peter Perakos

be an integral part of the story, it does not call inordinate attention to itself. Moving furniture, wailing spirits walking through walls, poltergeists, are totally absent. Instead, the antics of the living shock, delight, and amuse.

HEAVEN CAN WAIT is a remake of HERE COMES MR. JORDAN (Columbia, 1941), featuring Robert Montgomery as boxer Joe Pendleton, with Claude Rains in the title role and Edward Everett Horton as messenger 7013. The earlier film did not attempt social commentary; however, the more successful moments of HEAVEN CAN WAIT are those that focus on modern marriages, multinational corporations, big business take-overs in sports, and the like. The failings of Beatty's film are revealed in a comparison with the original. The great strength of HERE COMES MR. JORDAN lies in the detail of its finely drawn characters. Each was a distinct and memorable personality. In contrast, the script written by Beatty and Elaine May for the remake relegates the supporting characters to the status of props and foils for Beatty to play against, humorous, broadly drawn caricatures. James Mason as Jordan is a British bureaucrat; Buck Henry is a prissy, high strung nuisance; Julie Christie is a pretty love interest; Dyan Cannon and Charles Grodin are suitably frantic schemers; clichés all. The one possible exception is Jack Warden as Corkle, but even his role pales in comparison to James Gleason's character in the original film.

Clearly, Beatty is more than willing to carry the weight of the film; however, his ability to do so is questionable. Beatty might view his portrayal of Pendleton as an archetype: the "everyman," the little guy trying to cope with a world which is incomprehensible, impersonal and insensitive to his plight. But unlike Montgomery in the original film or Sylvester Stallone in ROCKY, Beatty as an actor works within a narrow range and is unable to communicate his character's painful and frequently bewildering search for something beyond himself, something virtually unattainable. The poignancy of Stallone's and Montgomery's performances was evident in their evocation of inner strength tempered with a touching vulnerability, of developing sensitivity and spiritual growth. Beatty's Pendleton seems but a variation on the many other inarticulate "hustlers" he has created.

HEAVEN CAN WAIT is as optimistic as either STAR WARS or CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, a part of the trend of the seventies to find spiritual consolation outside of the traditional avenues. Remarks Beatty, "What makes you feel good about the movie is that it says you're not going to die." As Farnsworth and then as the triumphant Tom Jarrett, Pendleton tells Betty that "There's nothing to be afraid of." HEAVEN CAN WAIT is gentle, kind, and reassuring despite its flaws. Evidently these are the qualities that guarantee a movie's success with the American public today. □

EATEN ALIVE

"...predictable, well beyond the tiresomeness of clichés..."

EATEN ALIVE A New World Pictures Release. 6/77(c76). In Color. 88 minutes. A Mars Production. Produced by Mardi Rustam. Directed by Tobe Hooper. Executive producer, Mohammed Rustam. Screenplay by Alvin Fast and Mardi Rustam. Director of photography, Robert Caramier. Art direction and sets by Marshall Reed. Associate producers, Samir Rustam, Robert Kantor, Larry Hulley.

With: Neville Brand, Mel Ferrer, Carolyn Jones, Marilyn Burns, William Finley, Stuart Whitman, Roberta Collins, Kyle Richards, Robert Englund.

Tobe Hooper, who gained cult repute equal to George Romero's with THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, went to Hollywood. The only result thus far, unfortunately, is a woebegone formula horror called, variously, DEATH TRAP (during production), STARLIGHT SLAUGHTER (during its initial release in 1976 by Virgo International), or EATEN ALIVE (as re-released by New World Pictures and seen here, unadvertised, along 42nd Street). Written by Alvin Fast and producer Mardi Rustam, the film has none of the grisly charm or the pell-mell, gut-level-pitched drive of CHAINSAW. An excellent cast, made up of Mel Ferrer, Stuart Whitman (as yet another sheriff), William Finley, Marilyn Burns (a CHAINSAW alumni), and Carolyn Jones, who

by David Bartholomew

Neville Brand as the down-home Southern crazy in Tobe Hooper's EATEN ALIVE. He's not cutting weeds with that scythe.

looks rather mummified around the face, are given very little to do and serve as victims for Neville Brand as a down-home Southern crazy who owns a rundown hotel called the "Starlight" and a pet alligator. Brand especially plays outrageously; his every syllable, let alone an occasional complete word which fumbles its way into the dialogue, is unintelligible.

The film's one merit, apart from the cast which is very unevenly directed, is its clinical reproduction (and use of it by Hooper) of the kind of airless, claustrophobic set, supposedly exterior but obviously built on a sound stage, that characterized numerous C-grade thrillers and horrors of the '30's and '40s, most particularly, PRC's 1946 STRANGLER OF THE SWAMP, with its set-bound, misty, dead-looking swamp. Brand's alligator lives in just such a bog, and the debris-strewn hotel built over and around it, looking like a cross between THE OLD DARK HOUSE and KEY LARGO's hotel after the hurricane, only worse, is often bathed in garish red light, which compliments the bloody killings, gorier than CHAINSAW's by far but with much less effect.

The film is predictable, well beyond the tiresomeness of clichés; the mechanical alligator doesn't work at all; and the film totally lacks the kind of nerve-racking aural assault of CHAINSAW. If this is any indication of the future, Hooper should drop any ideas of taking that pending Universal contract and hie himself back to Texas. □



EYES OF LAURA MARS

"...the filmmakers take an idea that is terrifically original in filmic terms, and sell it short by employing it solely as a plot contrivance."

EYES OF LAURA MARS A Columbia Pictures Release. 8/78. In Panavision and Metrocolor. 104 minutes. Produced by Jon Peters. Directed by Irvin Kershner. Executive producer, Jack H. Harris. Screenplay by John Carpenter and David Zelag Goodman from an original story by Carpenter. Director of photography, Victor J. Kemper. Music by Artie Kane. Edited by Michael Kahn. Production designer, Gene Callahan. Art director, Robert Gundlach. Sound by Les Lazarowitz. Costume design, Theoni V. Aldredge.

Laura Mars Faye Dunaway
John Neville Tommy Lee Jones
Tommy Ludlow Brad Dourif
Donald Phelps Rene Auberjonois
Michael Resiler Raul Julia
Sal Volpe Frank Adonis
Michele Lisa Taylor
Lulu Darlaine Flugel
Elaine Cassel Rose Gregorio
Bill Boggs Bill Boggs
Robert Steve Marachuk

EYES OF LAURA MARS has effectively silenced the hostile critics who charged that producer Jon Peter's creative position could only exist within girlfriend Barbra Streisand's shadow. This film is a stylish and diverting whodunnit/thriller in which Peters has demonstrated his own undeniable grasp of expert film craftsmanship by assembling technical elements that are almost uniformly excellent. At the same time, it must be said that as *cinefantastique*, the film is a total washout.

EYES OF LAURA MARS gets off on the right foot with an unseen figure thrusting an icepick through the right eye of the face on the cover of a book of photographs. A link is therefore made with the primary, essential medium preceding even the camera, in the photographer's art. Unfortunately, well thought out, perceptible notions like this are few, and used up early on.

John Carpenter's basic story

by Jordan R. Fox

Gravina, Coulouris and Valli in more fall-out from THE EXORCIST.

premise—that celebrated photographer Laura Mars (Faye Dunaway) experiences a strange kind of clairvoyance that forces her to see through the eyes of a psychotic killer stalking his/her next victim—is not only left undeveloped, it is practically avoided altogether. While it is not surprising that no one believes her, it's incredible that neither Mars nor anyone else exhibits even the slightest curiosity about the phenomenon, or attempts to understand it, test it, explain it, or deal with it. In all likelihood, the majority of viewers will pick up on a dozen or so enticing possibilities that *could have been* explored with highly rewarding results. What the filmmakers have done is to take an idea that is terrifically original in filmic terms, and sell it short by employing it solely as a plot contrivance.

This inability to deliver on substantial promise tends to become a pattern. There is the moral point raised about the irresponsible misuse of art for unsavory commercial purposes, and the extent to which this may serve as invitation or incitement for sick minds. With the exception of one sharp observation (Dunaway discussing the first murder over the phone with a friend, whose television set plays the killing banality of an Alka-Seltzer commercial, suggesting that though it may only be background noise to our culture, it is not without effect) this entire area is swept under the rug. Irvin Kershner's measured, deliberate pacing, which still manages to hold our interest throughout, can generate true suspense only fleetingly. A simple sequence of events is established—Mars temporarily blinded by being able to see nothing but the killer's climactic handiwork—and then simply rerun for subsequent murders without much in the way of embellishment. Even when the murderer becomes aware that someone is tuning in on his wavelength, and so begins to close in on Laura, there is no attempt made to capitalize on it, to develop and enrich the story with some clever twist or intriguing detail.

Two crucial aspects of the film do realize their potential. Depict-

ing Dunaway's visions in terms of somewhat blurry videotape images is among the most successful visualizations of a psychic ability to date. Her deepening romantic involvement with the quiet police lieutenant assigned to the case (Tommy Lee Jones) is the film's strongest suit. Dunaway, at 37, has lost none of her physical beauty, and has gained a warmth and vulnerability that is most appealing. Jones is an under-appreciated actor who more than compensates for his lack of leading man good looks with a solid and ingratiating screen presence. Supporting cast members, and their well-drawn characters, are all up to the very high level set by the principals.

Beyond that, mention should be made of the outstanding production design of Gene Callahan, and the equally fine art direction by Robert Gundlach. Whether the location is the understated elegance of Mars' apartment, the convincing milieu of a working photographer, the overly neat and artistic aftermath of the crimes, or the rarefied atmosphere of decadent chic in which Mars operates (key inspiration here from the work of Helmut Newton), their contribution is vital. An astute soundtrack—part original score, part previously recorded disco-type material, and an arresting title track sung by Streisand—also helps.

General mystery fans who don't mind important clues being withheld from them will probably enjoy EYES OF LAURA MARS. Some rather heavy-handed suspicions are tossed in the direction of the various characters, but it's fair comment on the film's overall design to point out that everything ultimately depends on recourse to an outrageous formula gimmick. Hitchcock could get away with this sort of thing 18 years ago, but then again, he didn't need to pull it out of a hat at the last minute, either. Today, it is just unworthy of a major film. Nevertheless, it should be quite interesting to see what Irvin Kershner (in the STAR WARS sequel) and Jon Peters may bring to other films of *cinefantastique*. □

THE NEW AVENGERS

"The series to date has been inconsistent, changing in style from week to week."

THE NEW AVENGERS A CBS Series. Premiere 9/15/78 (c76). 50 minutes. In Color. Produced by Albert Fennell and Brian Clemens (An Avengers Ltd. Production). Directors, Desmond Davis, Ernest Day, Graeme Clifford, James Hill, Brian Clemens. Writers, Clemens, Terence Feeley, Dennis Spooner, Ray Austin. Director of photography, Mike Reed. Production supervisor, Ron Fry. Music by Laurie Johnson. Editors, Graeme Clifford, Ralph Sheldon. Unit manager, Robert Fennell. Production designer, Sid Cain. Art director, Robert Bell.

John Steed Patrick Macnee
Purdey Joanna Lumley
Gambit Gareth Hunt

THE AVENGERS has a venerable history dating back to 1960. Originally Patrick MacNee, Chief Avenger John Steed, was brought into a cops and robbers television show called POLICE SURGEON, in a supporting role. Ian Hendry played the main character whose girlfriend had been gunned down, driving him into an "avenging" anger against all evil. The title of the show changed, Hendry lasted nine months, and then Macnee was moved into the main role and given a lovely assistant in the form of Honor Blackman as Cathy Gale. The rest, as they say, is history. After Miss Blackman, there was Diana Rigg as Emma Peel and Linda Thorson as Tara King.

In THE NEW AVENGERS, Macnee returns as the insufferable, unruffable Steed, a little wiser and mellower with age, and his new sidekicks are gorgeous but deadly Purdey (Joanna Lumley) and the cocky Mike Gambit (Gareth Hunt), the faithful footman of UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS). Together, they fight the same odd assortment of villains.

In Canada and England, THE NEW AVENGERS has already lasted through two seasons, but still hasn't found its stride despite the fact that Albert Fennell and

by Lee Rolfe

THE TEMPTER

"...all of Friedkin's de rigueur shock effects are dutifully recreated..."

THE TEMPTER An Aveo Embassy Release. 8/78 (c74). In DeLuxe Color. 96 (112) minutes. Produced by Edmondo Amati (Capitolina Produzioni Cinematografiche). Directed by Alberto De Martino. Assistant director, Joe Pollino. Production manager, Alfredo Nicolai. Screenplay by Gianfranco Clerici. Vincenzo Mannino, De Martino. Director of photography, Aristide Massaccesi. Matte photography, Biamonte Cinegroup. Edited by Vincenzo Tomassi. Art director, Umberto Bertacca. Music by Ennio Morricone, Bruno Nicolai.

Ippolita Carla Gravina
Massimo Oderisi Mel Ferrer
Bishop Oderisi Arthur Kennedy
Mittner George Coulouris
Irene Alida Valli
Gretel Anita Stringberg
Faith Healer Mario Scaccia
Psychiatrist Umberto Orsini

by David Bartholomew

There's not really much tempting about THE TEMPTER, a 1974 Italian film originally entitled THE ANTICHRIST (4:4:30). The movie has been shortened from 112 to 96 minutes for its nonsensically belated U.S. release, but the cutting doesn't shorten the film so much as play confusing havoc with the storyline. Edmondo Amati put the film in production just as THE EXORCIST was cleaning up at the boxoffice, and all of Friedkin's soon *de rigueur* shock effects are dutifully recreated: green bile vomiting, levitations, flying furniture, foul language spewed out in a deep "demon" voice, the ancient exorcist (George Coulouris) tottering in for the final bout. Although the uncredited effects still pack some punch, too few new wrinkles have been added, and it becomes tiresome watching Carla Gravina (a fine Italian actress whose roles have consistently,





Patrick Macnee

Brian Clemens, the original producers, are once again at the creative helm. They simply do not know what to do with their characters. The viewer has to know instinctively how the characters relate to one another in a series of this kind, because there isn't time to focus on relationships. The result is cardboard characters. But THE NEW AVENGERS still offers the same high level production values: tight editing, well-constructed plots, solid first-rate performances. All in all, it's a classy production.

Recent episodes have taken on a darker hue, reflecting a kind of *film noir* quality. The tone has become more sober, at times sombre, devoid of wit and pith. What made the old series so very good, especially when svelt Diana Rigg, in her nifty cut-out cat costumes, took over from the stiffer Honor Blackman, was the sharp crisp writing within the comic book format. You had to listen to the dialogue because much of it was peppered with outrageous one-liners, double entendres and wit. It was the interplay between the principals which made the program so endearing. Somehow it's been allowed to turn sour. The humor is all but gone.

It dealt, also, with the English

quite strangely, entailed her being battered about at some point), laughably overage as the "20-year-old" girl, become possessed by the reincarnation of a 15th Century ancestor burned for witchcraft, the spirit somehow giving way to the Devil who impregnates her with the antichrist. The film is more sexually overt than Friedkin's dared to be, and there's a fine DANTE'S INFERNO-like black mass filled with writhing nude bodies, the sequence shot as masturbatory fantasy of Gravina's, during which the walls of her bedroom melt away to cloud-flecked blue skies. It is director Alberto De Martino's only honestly surrealistic touch, and the film's only original moment. Plodding around in the cast are Arthur Kennedy, Mel Ferrer (as Gravina's father), Alida Valli, lovely Anita Stringberg, and Umberto Orsini, all trying their damndest to look interested in what they're doing. □

tendency to treat trivial matters as being terribly important and to treat important matters as being terribly trivial. "In THE AVENGERS we treat all those mad scientists as though utterly normal and yet could get terribly worked up over a stuck champagne cork," Macnee once said. All that's gone.

What's particularly distressing, however, is the change in the Steed character. Steed, as Macnee once said, is a playful combination of Leslie Howard's The Scarlet Pimpernel, Sir Ralph Richardson and his own dad. But Steed, during the past two seasons of the new show, has turned from dashing bon vivant, representing tradition and wealthy conservatism, into a cool calculating professional along the lines of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*; tired, world weary, worn out. It's not at all appealing or in keeping with what THE NEW AVENGERS should be, which is a spoof.

The series to date has been inconsistent, changing in tone and style from week-to-week. When THE NEW AVENGERS is good, it's very, very good. Especially pleasing were those episodes filmed in and around Toronto in the fall of last year. The episodes captured the essence of the old series. The best of this batch was "Emily," about an old well-kept 1940 auto with a perfectly preserved handprint of an elusive unidentified criminal. The story was a car chase but it bounced along extremely well. Also good was "Complex," a fanciful reworking of an earlier story in which Mrs. Peel was trapped in a murderous mansion. Another that hit the mark was the return of the cybernauts from the old show.

Purdey and Gambit work well together, with Miss Lumley being the most winning super secret agent since Mata Hari. Hers is a totally different character from any of the other AVENGERS costars. Purdey is more delicate, precise and more womanly than any of the others. There's something strangely compelling about her, though her outfits are more conventional than the leathers Mrs. Peel wore, or the minis of Tara King. The unconventional touch is that her below-the-knee dresses are slashed up the front for easy running or swinging from helicopters.

Gambit, who's less sophisticated than Steed, is the perfect foil for Purdey's put-downs. But his character hasn't been as finely drawn. He fluctuates between being a good-natured boob and a vicious unemotional killer.

THE NEW AVENGERS occasionally pays homage to Steed's former partners: Cathy Gale, Mrs. Peel and Tara King. It's a nice touch because it anchors the program and gives it a sense of history. The fleeting references made are a tip of the hat to each, and a wink of the eye that they're not forgotten. In one recent episode, Diana Rigg made a brief unbilled cameo appearance in a telephone conversation with Steed, who had called to discuss an old problem that had reappeared. Afterward, Purdey sniffed: "Calling in reinforcements?" □

THE MILPITAS MONSTER

"Despite its raft of technical impediments, the film is an offbeat, welcome diversion."

THE MILPITAS MONSTER A Samuel Golden Ayer Production. 1978 (c76). In 16mm and Technicolor. 83 (100) minutes. Produced, directed and edited by Robert Burrill. Screenplay by David Boston from a story by Burrill and Dave Kottas. Director of photography, Marilyn Odello. Music by Robert Berry. Special effects supervision by Duane Walz. Animation by Stephen C. Wathen. Makeup by Patricia and Anna Thorpe. Associate producer, Ted Armstrong.

With: Priscilla House, Doug Hagdohl, William C. Guest III, Bob Wilkins, Barney Brust, Michael Pegg. Narrated by Paul Frees.

THE MILPITAS MONSTER began with \$200 and an idea for a special effects film about a smogged monster terrorizing a small Northern California town. The film was designed mostly by students from Samuel Ayer High School where its producer and director, Robert Burrill, teaches. Heavily altered with behind-the-scenes professional help, it managed to transcend the label "amateur film," and seek distribution.

Burrill's original fifteen minute short depicted the Monster (a man-sized costume by David Kottas) demolishing a miniature cafe. With support garnered from the merchants and businessmen of Milpitas, California, Burrill advertised a "planned film" based on the short, to be produced in cooperation with the city. In the new script, the monster is spawned in the filth of a polluted lagoon, rising at night to pillage the town's garbage cans and refuse.

"Milpitas is a small suburban town with no particular identity, overlooking San Francisco," explained Burrill. "We're on the edge of a sewer plant, and we've joked about the smell hanging over the town. This kind of project proved the pride we had as a city in an era of social apathy." With help from investors and the Milpitas School District, principal photography began in June 1976, with a nonprofessional cast and crew. Though the result was expectedly crude, Burrill cut it to a longish 100 minutes (bringing the bill for the film to \$65,000) and put a gloss on the product with the aid of Duane Walz, an effects technician, Robert Berry, a San Jose-based composer, and animator Stephen C. Wathen, who constructed an articulated 4½ inch tall model and filmed several sequences of the monster flying.

THE MILPITAS MONSTER is essentially a mammoth parody of '50's horror films in the tradition of SCHLOCK. As the archetypal baffled populace investigates, the monster raids a high school dance and abducts the heroine. A citizen's task force corners it atop a TV transmission tower, where it meets its end in an obvious swipe from (or at) KING KONG. Burrill consciously strove to send up old B-film chillers with a charm

by Jeffrey Frentzen

those films never had. Despite its inverse *hommages* glorifying the grade-Z monster flicks, THE MILPITAS MONSTER is still more than just another lousy horror show. The in-jokes that work (such as the mock prop hand grabbing at Priscilla House) give the film a humorous/childish tone like that of DARK STAR, instead of a poor man's remake of REP-TILICUS.

Wathen's dimensional animation is the film's greatest asset, especially in shots of the monster flying over Milpitas, or beneath the water, clenching its fist in defiance prior to its first appearance. Some dignity is lent by the tongue-in-cheek narration of '50's science fiction film veteran Paul Frees. Despite its raft of technical impediments, the film is an offbeat, welcome diversion. □

Top: Who said filmmaking was all glamour and excitement?

The Monster (Scott Parker) awaits final touches from Duane Walz. Bottom: Steve Wathen's miniature and animation model.

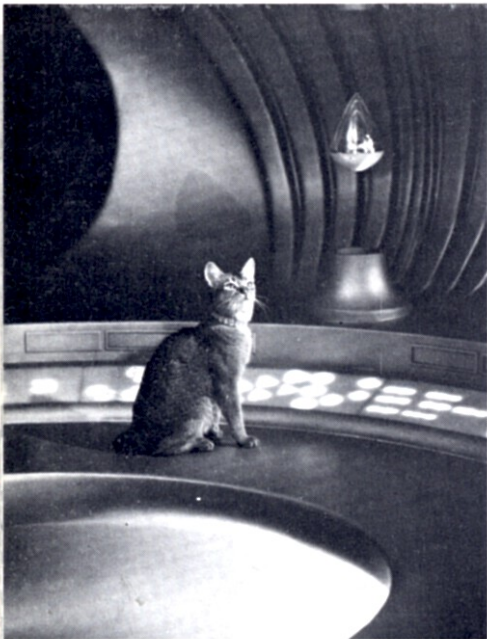


THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL [Franklin J. Schaffner] 20th Century-Fox, 10/78, 123 minutes, in color. With: Gregory Peck, Laurence Olivier, James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Uta Hagen, Denholm Elliott, Michael Gough.

Kudos are in order for Schaffner and a top cast for making yet another tale of old guard Nazis out to subjugate the world not only believable, but gripping. Olivier plays an old Nazi hunter who saves the day, in a finely-detailed, touching performance that should be Oscar material. Peck is the perfect counterpoint, playing a Nazi mad scientist, in an inspired bit of off-beat casting. The story premise is cloning, and the script by Heywood Gould, based on the Ira Levin novel, makes the best dramatic use of the concept yet.

Frederick S. Clarke

THE CAT FROM OUTER SPACE [Norman Tokar] Buena Vista, 7/78, 104 minutes, color. With: Ken Berry, Sandy Duncan, Roddy Mc-



THE CAT FROM OUTER SPACE
Jake, an extraterrestrial Morris.

Dowall, McLean Stevenson, Harry Morgan, Jesse White.

This latest example of Disney fluff is ideal for senseless toddlers and bored mothers with extra time on their hands. The rest of us will have to simply endure the adventures of Jake, an interstellar feline with telepathic abilities, after he's stranded on Earth. Inane slapstick, directed with the blankness of TV-comedy, is played for big yucks by a cast of TV-comedy rejects. The biggest laughs in **THE CAT FROM OUTER SPACE** are not to be found in the live-action, but in the special effects, including Mike Minor's idiotic "saucer," a sort of **CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE CUTE KIND**.

Jeffrey Frentzen

THE CHOSEN [Alberto DeMartino] AIP, 9/78 (c77), 105 minutes, color. With: Kirk Douglas, Simon Ward, Agostina Belli, Anthony Quayle.

The idea that the Anti-Christ would use modern technology and science to destroy Mankind is interesting, but since it's never realized beyond the blueprint and foundation stage, one is left unsatisfied. The eeriest, most effective sequence of the film, which hints at what might have been, is a dream/vision of Douglas' nuclear power plant rising from the sea and towering above him, changing into a 7-headed serpent, symbolizing its evil. The film tends to drag, but is bolstered by the cast and photography.

John P. Hays

THE CLONE MASTER [Don Medford] NBC-TV Telefilm, 9/14/78, 96 minutes, color. With: Art Hindle, Robyn Douglas, Ralph Bellamy, Ed Lauter, John Van Dreelan, Mario Roccuzzo.

"A clone is an organism derived from a single cell via asexual reproduction." This loose definition, spouted by Ralph Bellamy straight from Webster's, is the closest this "vidpic" swings to true science. **THE CLONE MASTER** prefers a tatty hybrid of Irwin Allen science (with mock-serious dialogue like "clone malfunction!") and *National Enquirer* misconceptions designed to exploit the current clone vogue, to wit: an illegal, clandestine clone operation, funded by bucks skimmed Watergate-style from another project, yield up a gross of dupes identical to one scientist. Punched-up for the season-premiere week as "combining science-fiction, espionage action and tongue-in-cheek humor" (who listens to this stuff?), the espionage consists of dumb cop-show chases while all the humor is rooted in viewer ridicule. In short, a below-average video bomb that is in itself a clone of countless pseudo-sf shows.

Dave Schow

HALLOWEEN [John Carpenter] Mid-American/Compass Int'l, 10/78, 91 minutes, color and scope. With: Donald Pleasance, Jamie Lee Curtis, P. J. Soles, Tony Moran, Nick Castle.

A stony-faced butcher-knife wacko terrorizes an oblivious glut of high school stereotypes in an Illinois suburb on Hallowe'en. Prowling about in a stolen car and wearing a Leatherface-style rubber mask, he is totally unnoticed by the blockhead police and boring populace. Michael Myers, you see, was locked up at age 6 for knifing his sister, and now has become the earthly manifestation of the "boogiemani," apparently invisible to all but his victims at stabbing time.

Carpenter limply exploits All Hallow's Eve almost as an afterthought, deleting character motivation or plot comprehensibility in favor of the standard stalk-and-scare. His leaden direction of the murder scenes hampers his already ridiculous story. Viewers aren't even tricked, much less treated.

Dave Schow

JENNIFER [Brice Mack] AIP, 5/78, 90 minutes, color. With: Lisa Pelikan, Bert Convy, Nina Foch,



THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL
Peck, just one of the boys.

Amy Johnston, John Gavin, Jeff Corey.

Jennifer (Lisa Pelikan) gets all kinds of verbal and physical abuse from teenie-bopper peers at a private school, while her father (Jeff Corey), a religious crackpot, encourages a maturation of her psychokinetic power over snakes. Before you can say Brian DePalma, Jennifer unleashes her fury embodied in a giant reptilian hand-puppet, munching mechanically on arms and heads, until all villains (including Nina Foch, as the definitive tutorial bitch) are dispatched. This rough compromise between **WILLARD** and **CARRIE** activates a long list of derivative chills unsustained by the rambling, moronic script. In hopes of alleviating this filmic frustration, the backwoods superstition angle is overplayed, to identify with the rural drive-in crowd. The shoe fits.

Jeffrey Frentzen

THE REDEEMER [Constantine S. Gochis] Dimension, 4/78, 83 minutes, color. With: T. G. Finkbinder, Jeannetta Arnette, Christopher Flint, Nikki Barthen, Nick Carter, Damien Knight.

This dry horror spectacle details the graphic mutilation of a set of high school alumni, put to task for their vain, banal lifestyles. An angel from Hell manifests itself on the killer's hand (in the form of an extra prosthetic thumb) and materializes into a young boy at the film's end. Such profundity seems trivial in view of the violence. The plot is built around a misrepresentation of Biblical prophecy, which is ultimately more insulting than the raging flood of phony blood.

Jeffrey Frentzen

THE REDEEMER
Christopher Flint, he's all thumbs.



WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS [Kevin Connor] Columbia, 7/78, 96 minutes, in color. With: Doug McClure, Peter Gilmore, Shane Rimmer, Lea Brodie.

Producer John Dark, the monomaniac obsessed with period-flavor fantasy, has sanctioned yet another burlesque of Burroughs, this time not directly but stylistically tailored to the nonsense world of **ERB**. We're treated to an undersea kingdom ruled by Martians (!), capturing a crew of scientists and greedy seahands from an oceanic expedition to forbidden waters. But leave it to stalwart Doug McClure to defeat the extraterrestrials, their trained octopus, and a gang of dome-headed robots; Atlantis crumbles, but can sink no lower.

Jeffrey Frentzen

WATERSHIP DOWN [Martin Rosen] Avco-Embassy, 9/78, 92 minutes, color. Voices: John Hurt, Zero Mostel, Harry Andrews.

A band of rabbits struggle to survive amidst hostile surroundings. That's the basis of this beguiling animated fantasy, derived from Richard Adams' bestseller. These rabbits are not of the insufferably cute, anthropomorphized variety. They have a logically developed language and culture (with its own legends and oral traditions), and perceptively drawn individual personalities. A crucial aspect of the film is that it is imbued with something the Disney school of fantasy never sought or wanted—Guts: the willingness to face up to the very real consequences of decisions made and actions taken. **WATERSHIP DOWN** has no childish condescension; adults should enjoy it more than children.

The animation, as different in style from anything we may be familiar with, has an extraordinary sense of depth and attention to detail. Moving camera shots that take place during animated action—pans and tilts creating a fully-realized world that continues well beyond the frame—are striking. Watch out Bakshi: the standard has been set!

Jordan R. Fox

THE WIZ [Sidney Lumet] Universal, 10/78, 133 minutes, in color. With: Diana Ross, Nipsey Russell, Richard Pryor, Lena Horne.

THE WIZARD OF OZ gets some soul, and with the black it's just as beautiful. No match for the classic MGM film in either its writing or performances, it nevertheless manages to be almost as magic and memorable. Outstanding are Michael Jackson's Scarecrow and Nipsey Russell's Tin Man, the make-up of Stan Winston, and Albert Whitlock's special visual effects. It's the music, songs and choreography, and Lumet's imaginative staging, that make up for any deficiencies. For once we have a Christmas attraction that's more than just a hollow promise of spectacular entertainment. When you see how Universal spends \$30 million, it makes you sad to think what they could have done if they had won the race to remake **KING KONG**.

Frederick S. Clarke



PIRANHA is a crude, exploitation horror movie, the kind Roger Corman used to personally direct, but now passes-on, baton-like, to a new generation of filmmaker, as the *paterfamilias* of New World Pictures, his own production and distribution company. "The original budget was about \$900,000," says producer Jon Davison. "Four days before we started shooting, Roger Corman cut \$200,000 out of it, which didn't help." Corman probably needed the money for AVALANCHE, his bid to enter the big-budget, big-star disaster picture sweepstakes. "He was more concerned with that," says PIRANHA director Joe Dante. "As far as our movie went, he never came to the set or looked at the dailies. Roger didn't even know who was in the picture until he saw it. In fact, when he saw Bruce Gordon, he turned to me and said, 'Who is that guy?' And I said, 'He was in one of your pictures. TOWER OF LONDON, remember? He gets eaten by rats.'" The irony is that PIRANHA, Jon Davison and Joe Dante's little horror programmer, outgrossed AVALANCHE this summer and is making more money than any New World Picture ever has!

PIRANHA has a JAWS-inspired plot with a fifties B-movie ambience edited to the seventies fast pace. I wondered if either of the filmmakers had talked to Steven Spielberg about the project, or exposed him to their efforts. Dante was quick to put me in the proper perspective: "We don't even know Spielberg. We don't know anybody. We work for New World."

"Everyone talks about how this picture owes to Spielberg," added Davison. "Who it really owes to is Jack Arnold. JAWS was really nothing more than an expensive fifties monster-on-the-loose picture. It really owes a great deal to THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON. We're not denying that PIRANHA is a rip-off of JAWS, but we'd much rather think of it as a rip-off of THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON."

PIRANHA is pulled through by a good cast, led by Bradford Dillman, chock full of familiar B-film horror faces: Kevin McCarthy, the star of the original INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS as a mad scientist, Dick Miller as a fast-talking land developer, and Barbara Steele as a sinister Army scientist. "We wanted Morris Ankrum as the general," said Davison, "but Morris is dead. In fact, we had an entire 'dead cast' for this picture, and it was great!" The piranhas are explained as

deadly hybrids developed by the Army for use in the rivers of Viet Nam. "I don't think this picture plays on a serious level," admits Dante. "It's not my statement on Viet Nam, please!" "SWIMMING HOME, we were going to call it," quips Davison.

Jon Berg was cornered by Davison to handle the film's extensive effects for a cut-rate \$50,000. "That's absolutely nil for what these scenes required," griped Berg. But Davison gives Berg credit, saying "Every day he had the good sense to come up to me and say, 'I'm never doing another special effects picture again!'" Dante added, "Jon used to say everytime he'd set up a shot, 'This will never work.' Frequently he was right."

Seventy-six rubber Piranhas were constructed in four weeks by Phil Tippett, wife Jools and Rob Bottin. Four additional fish were made with metal teeth for closeups in which they chew into rubber prosthetic arms constructed by Rob Short and Chris Walas. Berg first attempted to film the rubber Piranhas underwater, but encountered insurmountable hydrodynamic problems. Eventually he hung them on a sound stage, filming dry for wet, and moved his camera through the models suspended from strings. "It was similar to what we were doing on STAR WARS with motion control equipment," says Berg, adding, "The chief difference being the STAR WARS models weren't hanging from strings!" Peter Kuran's set-up for the shots, called "fish-bys," created a realistic underwater mood by using a diffusion filter and blue gel in front of the lens, with a white cyc in the background. Adam Beckett provided a brief three-second optical of the fish massing for the summer camp attack, using flat-bed animation.

Producer Jon Davison is a fan of stop-motion animation and originally wanted to use the process to film the Piranhas, "but Jon Berg threatened to kill us, so we backed down." Explains Berg, "To do shots of 30 or 40 fish in stop motion would have been infeasible on the budget we were given." But when Berg brought Phil Tippett on the production, Davison struck up an agreement for a stop motion segment for the film. Tippett devised a little Ymir-like creature, used in three cuts, which lurks unobserved in Kevin McCarthy's laboratory. A hand-puppet of a creature inside an aquarium in the same sequence was manipulated by his wife Jools. But this nicely done sequence lost its point when the film's original ending was abandoned. At the end of the film Barbara Steele looks into the camera furtively while assuring reporters "There's nothing left to fear." Davison provides the missing punchline: "We were going to cut to Santa Monica Beach, covered with hundreds of people, and walking into frame, now a hundred feet tall, is Phil's monster!" That would have provided the perfect, light capper for PIRANHA's uneasy mixture of blood and gore and campy performances. □

Top: A piranha attacks, one of 76 rubber models, barely visible in the film. 2: A victim of the man-eating fish. 3: Animator Phil Tippett's Ymir-like creature lurks amid the beakers and test-tubes in Dr. Hoak's lab. Bottom: Bradford Dillman, the hero, wrings the true story behind the piranha attacks from Kevin McCarthy, as mad scientist Dr. Hoak.

by Paul Mandell

DAN O'BANNON ON ALIEN

"Essentially, ALIEN is a kind of Lovecraftian horror movie in outer space. As an adjective, 'alien' means strange, foreign, distant, remote, hostile, repugnant. As a noun, it refers to a monster."

Dan O'Bannon

The concept for ALIEN arose during a starvation period mutually suffered by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett following the collapse of the abortive DUNE film project. Although ALIEN as a film is surrounded by the type of security shield endemic to science fiction films these days, 20th Century-Fox itself has leaked details concerning the plot via a slide-and-talk presentation sponsored by Charles Lippincott at the 1978 World Science Fiction Convention in Phoenix, Arizona this past August. The specifics Fox has revealed are as follows:

The interstellar commercial vessel Nostromo is returning to Earth from a deep-space mining expedition when it intercepts a transmission of decidedly alien origin. Setting down on a barren planet to investigate, the crew discovers an immense derelict craft, apparently abandoned. After descending a gaping black shaft within the alien ship, Nostromo crewman Kane (John Hurt) discovers a chamber containing what appear to be leathery, ovoid "eggs." While examining one, the shape abruptly bursts open to free a bony, amoebic parasite straight out of FIEND WITHOUT A FACE, which attaches itself to Kane's helmet. Imploding the faceplate, it wraps its skeletal fingers around his head and forces a slick, organic probus down his throat. It is in this condition that Kane is winched up out of the bowels of the ship—unconscious but alive and nurturing the parasite. When the alien and its victim are taken aboard the Nostromo, it becomes clear that the weird being is only just getting started. This, in addition to the displays of preproduction art and set concepts used in the film, is the extent of Fox's convention presentation.

At first glance the beginning of ALIEN seems to be a grisly hybrid of the most lurid elements of 50's sf films like IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE, 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH, FIEND WITHOUT A FACE and NIGHT OF THE

by Dave Schow

Dan O'Bannon & Ron Cobb



BLOOD BEAST. Other references take the form of genre hommages, such as the "mad labs" computer displays, or the inevitable, fuseless and shorting control panels. But Fox views ALIEN as more than just a big-budget 'B' picture—witness the \$6.5 million budget the studio has slapped down for its production, one that may run into \$10 million, in addition to a planned \$9 million ad campaign—even though writer Dan O'Bannon originally conceived the project as a low-budget film costing no more than half a million dollars to produce.

In addition to keeping a lid on plot as per Fox command, O'Bannon is understandably reticent to discuss specific plot items because "it would deprive the audience of the fun of finding out."

DAN O'BANNON

I wrote ALIEN in something like three months, which is very fast for me—Ron Shusett helped me out; I was sleeping on his couch in fact. I had no other place to stay after DUNE collapsed, and knew I had to do something fast to salvage my situation. So we wrote ALIEN—it couldn't have been more eleventh-hour—and it worked. Ronny is now executive producer on the film.

Brandywine Productions bought an option on the script in early 1977. Walter Hill was one of the partners and he showed me the style of scriptwriting he had developed, a simplified, easy-to-read format that looked like blank verse. It had become a sure-fire format for him and he promptly sat down and wrote ALIEN into that format in order to sell it to Fox. Fox bought it, and agreed to pick up the tab for preproduction to start. I was hired to do some artwork with Ron Cobb [who worked with O'Bannon on DARK STAR], and we brought in Chris Foss [also from DUNE], an excellent London artist. Later we got H. R. Giger, a fantastic artist from Switzerland, working on the concept of the alien. Cobb and I went to England at the end of January 1978, to work on preproduction, and stayed there about six months.

ALIEN, like STAR WARS, has its roots in sf pulp adventure, but the action is bloodcurdling and graphic inside a storyline that is sexual, hard-hitting, and realistic. On the set-design and effects level its aspirations are most lofty, but the monster-on-the-loose plot implies nothing so much (given the context) as a high-handed gore movie in space.

DAN O'BANNON

I love gore films, and I grew up on '50's monster movies. The idea for the monster in ALIEN originally came from a stomach ache I had. The creature itself is a simplified spin-off of one I developed for a novel I'm working on called *They Bite* which I originally developed as a film. The producers I showed it to felt it was too weird and that it would be too expensive to do because of the special effects involved. But they all did admit that it frightened them. When I got ready to write ALIEN, I pulled a couple of concepts from *THEY BITE* and put them into deep space. H. R. Giger designed, sculpted and painted the alien itself at Shepperton. He has an incredible imagi-

Ron Cobb's preproduction paintings of the *Snark* for ALIEN, the *Nostromo's* shuttlecraft, now called the *Narcissus*. [Photos by Jerry Wolfe, ©1978 by Dan O'Bannon]

nation for things that are strange and frightening. The concept I had was for a lifeform which operated by entirely different rules than human lifeforms.

Ridley Scott, who is the director of the film, is truly a brilliant visual stylist (*THE DUELLISTS*) and I liked him a lot. Before he started working on ALIEN, he sat down, upon my recommendation, and watched *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*—and he came out ecstatic; he loved it! And it surprised me because Ridley's films are so lush and romantic. He made *everybody* watch *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*, which is documentary and stark and violent.

I will say that on the last day before I left England, the last scene I watched them shooting had the entire cast drenched from head to toe in blood. The actors walked onto the set to find the entire crew dressed in coveralls and plastic tarpaulins covering all the cameras. And those proved to be necessary. I don't know if it will look that way onscreen.

ALIEN was set at one point to use stop-motion animation to depict the creature, but this technique was abandoned in favor of a Carlo Rambaldi-type mechanical creation. The spacesuit designs are the product of the film's brief affiliation with Jean ("Moebius") Giraud, and "all of the hardware" seen in ALIEN was designed by Ron Cobb. Both Cobb and Giger, for his alien design, have been promised credit on the film as "concept artists," despite the fact that Michael Seymour served, and will be credited, as "production designer."

ALIEN began filming at England's Shepperton Studios on July 15, and visitors to the set are routinely cleared whenever scenes involving the pivotal alien creature are being shot. With its big production and advertising budget, Fox is hoping to recreate the success of STAR WARS when the film is released next May. The pressure will be on from up high to get a more profitable PG rating, and slant the promotion of the film toward the STAR WARS kiddie market, something just not possible if ALIEN is filmed as intended. O'Bannon denies this possibility, assuring that, "I heard from Fox that 'R' was going to be the rating, and no one seemed too disturbed about that."

Tom Skerritt is Dallas, captain of the *Nostromo*, and Veronica Cartwright is headstrong and ballsy science officer Ripley, who faces the rampaging Alien alone, as the last surviving member of the *Nostromo's* crew. A strong supporting cast includes Yaphet Kotto, Ian Holm, Harry Dean Stanton and Sigourney Weaver. ALIEN's full complement of special effects and miniatures are under the control of Brian Johnson, who will do ALIEN simultaneously with his work on STAR WARS II. When probed concerning his contribution to ALIEN's effects, O'Bannon commented, "I will say that I have a contract which *guarantees* that I will do the special effects on ALIEN. I will also say that I did not do them." □

**Richard Matheson scripts
THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES**

Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* (Bantam Books, \$1.95) has been adapted as a six hour miniseries for television by Richard Matheson. Charles Fries Productions (Fries and Dick Berg) will produce in association with Stonehenge Productions (Andrew Donally and Milton Subotsky) for NBC. Subotsky has since anked his association with Donally and will not be actively involved in the production, to star Rock Hudson (reportedly for \$750,000), Darren McGavin, Fritz Weaver, Gayle Hunnicutt, Roddy McDowall, and Barry Morse. Subotsky produced DOMINIQUE in association with Donally (6:4/7:1:52), directed by Michael Anderson, and Anderson has been selected to helm the miniseries (he also directed LOGAN'S RUN). Filming began September 18 in London, with exteriors—the arid Martian terrain, canals, etc.—to be photographed on Malta. Visual effects, to be done in England, will consume a third of the picture's \$7.5 budget.

Matheson believes his teleplay of THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES will be well received by devotees of science fiction and Bradbury. "The screenplay is as faithful to the original as I could manage with the problem of trying to tie the stories together somehow. Ray is happy with the script. The approach is anthological, picaresque. The format is three, two-hour segments: 'The Expeditions,' 'The Colonists,' and 'The Martians.' 'Second Expedition' and 'Usher II' have been excluded for time's sake. Captain Wilder [Hudson] will be the link to the stories. He appears in many of them."

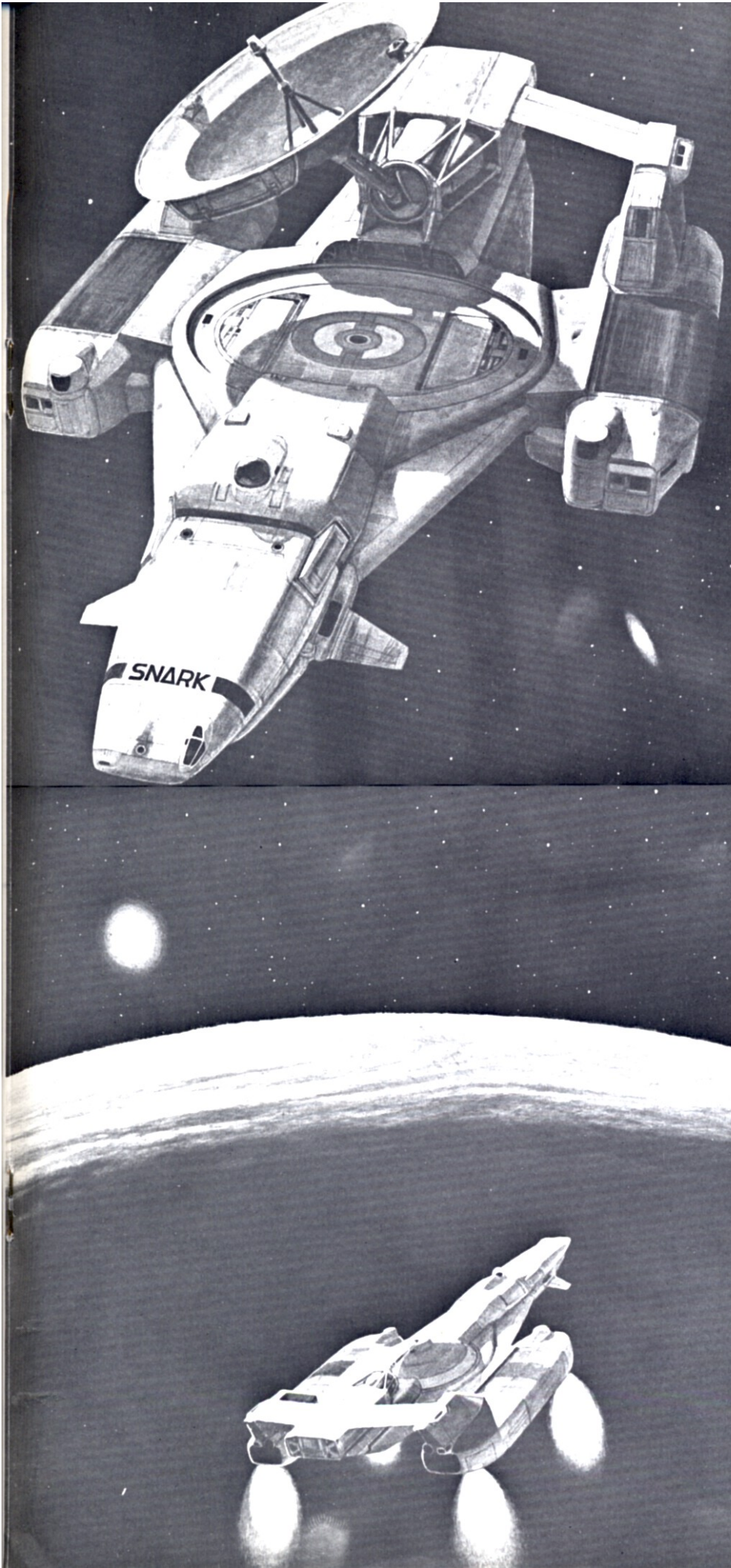
Do the various implications in the project being done for television, as opposed to feature films, disturb Matheson? "No," he says, always a supporter of the positive potential of the TV medium. "I like mini-series better than movies because you can do the story as it demands. *The Martian Chronicles* would never have been made as a movie. It had to be done as a mini-series." The property had kicked around Universal for years in the sixties, unsuccessfully, under the auspices of producer Alan J. Pakula and director Robert Mulligan.

What does an old pro like Matheson, who got into films in the fifties by adapting his own THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN, think of the current science fiction film boom? "I doubt if it's leading us anywhere," he says. "It makes money now, so it'll flourish until the cycle passes again." Matheson's script for CYBERNIA, passed-over by New World Pictures a few years back, may get produced next year by the Osmond group. He's currently writing a script of his own *Bid Time Return*, to be directed by Jeannot Szwarc and has a new novel out, *What Dreams May Come*. Peter Perakos

**THE LATHE OF HEAVEN
Pilot for Science Fiction Series**

Filming begins the latter part of November on Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Lathe of Heaven* (Ace Books, \$1.95), to be co-directed with Fred Barzick by producer David Loxton (see announcement 7:3/7:4:77). Says Loxton, "I think that Ursula is one of the finest writers of speculative fiction, and THE LATHE OF HEAVEN will be special because of her involvement. Originally she was to serve as script consultant, but as the project grew, she became more and more involved. The final script by Roger Swaybill will be as faithful to the novel as possible. In fact, I'm very pleased to say that Ursula has written a great deal of the dialogue."

Video experimenter and reknowned science fiction illustrator Ed Emshwiller has completed twenty elaborate, full color pre-production paintings to aid Loxton in establishing a cohesive visual style. The story calls for many spectacular optical effects: earth devastated by an ecological catastrophe; volcanic eruptions; the bizarre, world altering dreams of protagonist George Orr; the arrival continued page 31



TIME AFTER TIME

"Use some Balls?" said Nicholas Meyer—best-selling author, screenwriter, and now, director. Not being particularly sharp that day, and so not noticing the can of hard candy with the irreverent label he had picked up from the desk-top, the best response I could manage was a halting "How's that again?"—all perhaps suggesting a penchant on Meyer's part for catching people off balance. My visit to the production office at The Burbank Studios was prompted by an interest in a project that has so far attracted very little attention, not so much through any prevailing secrecy as due to the overshadowing effect of various colossally budgeted films in active preparation or production.

TIME AFTER TIME, which began shooting in northern California in late September, marks the directorial debut of the writer of THE SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION. The story follows a young H. G. Wells, who in 1893 invites a group of friends to a party to witness the unveiling of his greatest invention: a time machine. All the guests attend the event with a kind of tolerantly amused disbelief—all except one. Dr. Henry Stevenson, a London surgeon and frequent opponent of Wells at chess, is a desperate man guarding a terrible secret. Later, when police interrupt the party with the news that they have tracked The Ripper to this location, Dr. Stevenson is found to be the only guest unaccounted for. Wells, who at the unveiling had parried jibes about when the maiden voyage was to take place, saying the machine was not yet ready, now rushes down to the lab to find that it is gone.

After a brief interval, the machine returns minus its passenger, thanks to a safety feature Wells had incorporated into the design. The dials read "1979," and in view of Wells' own predictions about the way future history would develop, Meyer explained, "he now believes that he's unleashed a homicidal maniac upon a utopian society." So, gathering whatever negotiable valuables he can lay his hands on, Wells uses his fantastic invention in a pursuit through time. Following the same fluke course it took previously, the machine winds up in *this* country in 1979.

by Jordan R. Fox

Time After Time, a novel by Karl Alexander purchased prior to publication and adapted for the screen by Meyer, employs a clever and fairly original approach: creative anachronism. "The science fiction is based on a unique premise: No props. Just automobiles, airplanes, mini-skirts, push-button phones. If they don't recognize it, they might as well be Martians in this landscape."

The film will, however, have at least one elaborate time-travel sequence. "In THE TIME MACHINE, the George Pal movie, there is a plaque on the time machine that reads 'Built by Herbert George Wells,' which clearly identifies the time traveller, who is not otherwise identified in the novel or the film. We're just making it official. . . . Our film is a manhunt thriller; a romance, involving a woman Wells meets there; science fiction; bitter social comment; and, inevitably, it's a comedy."

Emphasizing character over the more traditional accoutrements of the genre, the story also makes much of the wide discrepancy between Wells' nineteenth century predictions about the shape of things to come, and the actual late twentieth century reality he finds here. "Wells corners the Ripper in a hotel room at one point, trying to get him to go back. 'Why?' the Ripper wants to know. Wells says something about them not belonging. And the Ripper turns on the television set, saying 'Oh no?' On every channel there's horrendous violence, the six o'clock news and all that. 'Ninety years ago I was a freak,' he says, 'today I'm an amateur. No one's going to notice.'"

I allow as it seems an interesting premise. "Come on, you *know* it's sensational! The more you think about it, the more the possibilities. . . . The story is rather simple, and to shoot it is relatively simple, which is why they're letting me direct it."

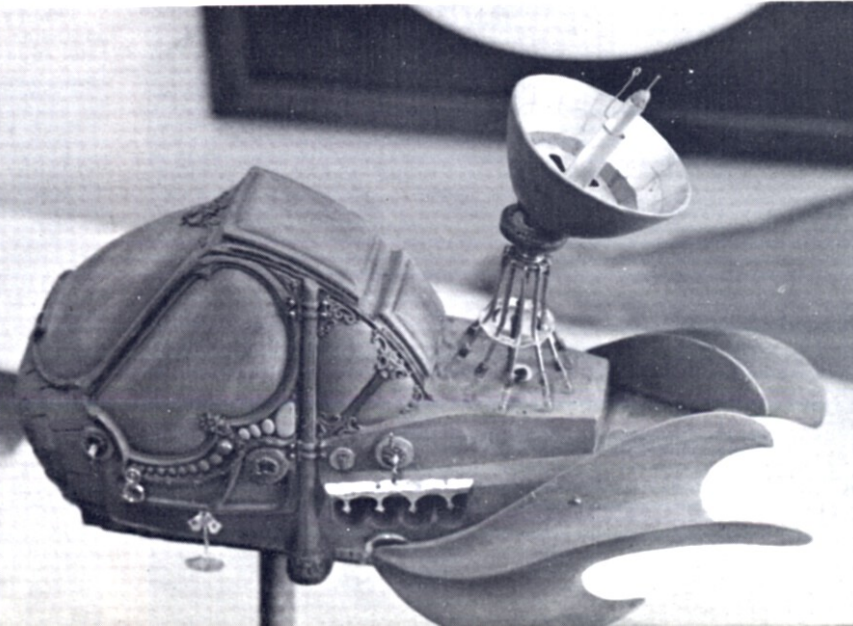
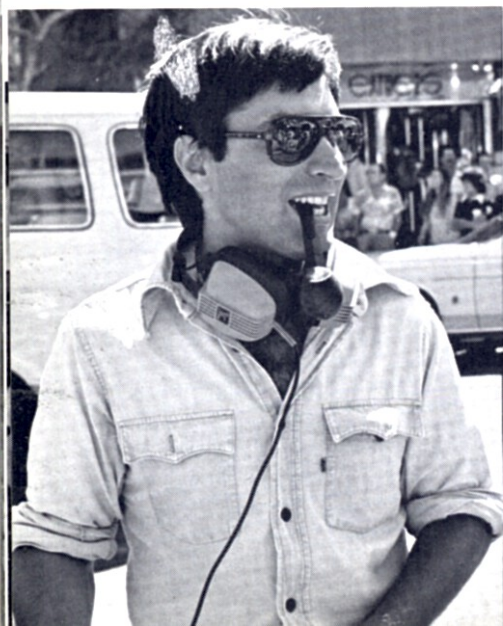
Of the scripts Meyer has produced, the very least that can be said is that they were all highly unusual. There was: the telemovie featuring Khigh Dheigh (who made several appearances as the Red Chinese master-villain Wo Fat in HAWAII FIVE-O) as a Buddhist detective in a 7th Century Chinese monastery; one of the early docu-dramas, THE NIGHT THAT PANICKED AMERICA, about the com-

motion that ensued following Orson Welles' radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* (Meyer expresses great surprise at the Emmy nomination his teleplay received, seeing as he does not think much of it); and his first venture into film and science fiction, an original script entitled "The Honey Factor," which was made into the little known exploitation film INVASION OF THE BEE GIRLS (reviewed 5:1:30).

"I thought it was an imaginative, original idea, given the parameters of exploitation movies. It dealt with a Rand type center out in the California desert, and the bored wives of the scientists. The story was really inspired by a woman who wrote in to the *New York Times* after seeing FRENZY, saying that just once she'd like to see *men* as the victims. The script was intelligent enough that the movie could've played Cinema I in New York, or it could have played the Paramis Drive-In. We live in an age of specialization, and you can guess which one the producers went for." While Meyer was away on vacation, the script was taken away from him (contrary to his arrangement with the producers) and completely rewritten by someone else. "They took what had been mysterious and made it explicit, and also quite idiotic." He then tried to have his name removed, but the Writer's Guild Arbitration Committee inexplicably removed the *other* writer's name! Meyer has never seen the film.

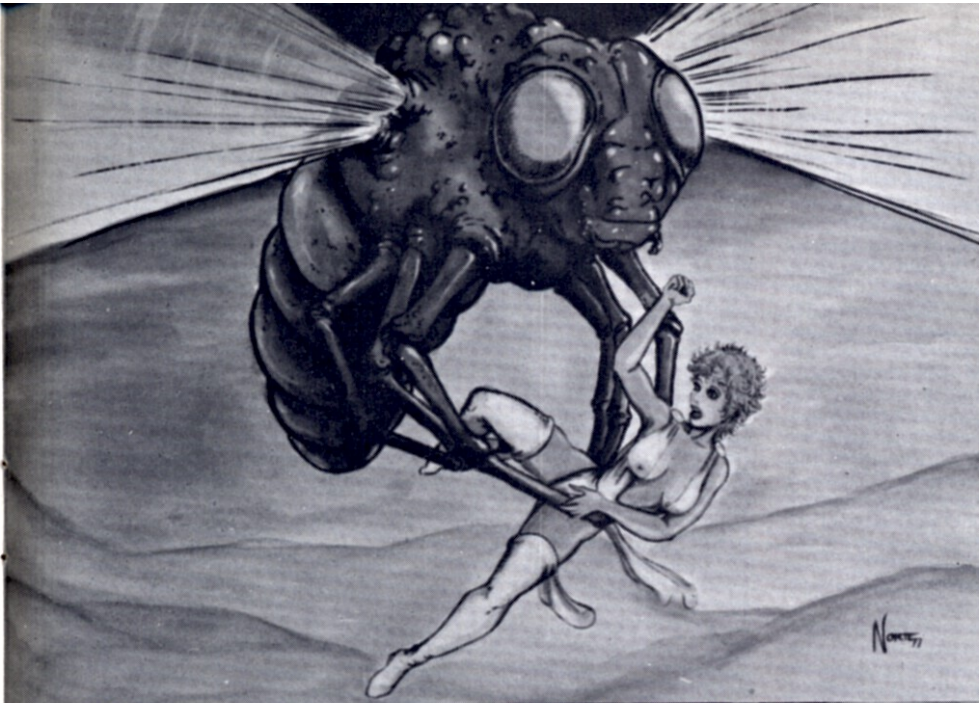
TIME AFTER TIME will be shot with a newly developed Panavision lens and special film stock that require very little light, greatly simplifying production. The budget is tentatively figured at \$3.8 million. Malcolm McDowell stars as H. G. Wells, with David Warner as Dr. Stevenson/The Ripper, and Mary Steenburgen as Wells' latter day love interest.

How does Meyer feel about being a first-time director? "I don't see how anyone could be a director on a project they weren't absolutely mad/crazy for. There is so much detail involved, it would be the worst, most onerous kind of chore. I know this goes against the history of movies, but the way I work is that the script and story potential has to appeal to me so much I can't stop thinking about it. Only if I'm enthralled with the material can I do my best work." □



Left: Writer and director Nicholas Meyer, filming TIME AFTER TIME in northern California. Right: Miniature prototype of the time machine that will whisk H. G. Wells into modern day America. Herb Jaffe produces, for release by Warner Bros.

WAR LORD OF TERRA



New in the lineup of stop motion animation adventure films is Bill Stromberg's **WAR LORD OF TERRA**, with production scheduled to start in January 1979 for possible release in the spring or summer of 1980. Stromberg is producer and director. The story essentially deals with time travel—a 20th century test pilot who is testing a high-altitude orbital bomber goes through a time warp, lands in the future, and becomes involved in a war between factions. Preproduction is now in progress with storyboards amounting to some 1500 drawings. Armando Norte, who is gaining a reputation as a talented illustrator, is developing the artwork.

According to Stromberg, the first half of the film will contain three major stop motion sequences, with snippets of stop motion in the second half. Much of the effects will lean heavily on miniatures. "Rather than being the main thrust, the animation will be used as a complement to the story rather than *the* story."

Interestingly, **TIMEGATE**, **THE PRIMEVALS**, and **WAR LORD OF TERRA** bear little resemblance to each other, which is very exciting as far as the genre is concerned. "You really can't invite comparison between the three thematically, but you will be able to artistically," notes Stromberg. "The primary thrust of **WAR LORD** is the struggle between two factions to gain supremacy of the earth. It's not a period picture; if it had to be compared with anything, it might invite comparison with elements in **THE TIME MACHINE** and **THINGS TO COME**." The film will be shot in Panavision and will utilize the Dolby stereo sound system. Animation will be composited with front-and-back light travelling mattes, and blue screen is anticipated for certain shots. Dean Jeffries, who built the Landmaster for **DAMNATION ALLEY** and the Sandman car for TV's **LOGAN'S RUN**, will build the vehicles. "Dean's a technical wiz in that regard," says Stromberg. "What we'll have are full-sized functional vehicles. A top-notch special effects supervisor has been committed to the project in an advisory capacity and a big name star is looking at the script."

Stromberg's new film will be an ambitious undertaking and should not invite comparison with his previous effort, **THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER**. "It had such a small budget, we really couldn't do much with it. With **WAR LORD**, we are seeking first-rate names and effects. We want to back the picture up with solid characters." Associate producer Leo Cascio describes the project as basic action-adventure set in a future time. "This will be a major production," says Cascio. "We intend to attract top talent."

Add Bill Stromberg's **WAR LORD OF TERRA** to the major releases anticipated by David Allen, Jim Danforth, and Ray Harryhausen for the 1980's, and the extensive use of stop motion planned for **STAR WARS II**, and it becomes the most prolific period in the history of the genre. □

Armando Norte's preproduction paintings for WAR LORD OF TERRA, the adventures of a crashed test pilot (bottom) in a world of the future. [© 1978 by William Stromberg]

by Paul Mandell

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS



Screenwriter W. D. Richter and director Phil Kaufman.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, a remake of the 1956 Allied Artists film, will be released by United Artists this December as the company's major Christmas attraction. W. D. Richter, who is currently writing Universal's DRACULA, updated the script, based on Jack Finney's novel and the original film written by Daniel Mainwaring, and changed the setting from small town Santa Mira to big city San Francisco. Donald Sutherland stars in the role of a city health inspector who uncovers the pod menace. "He's a cynic," says Richter, "a guy who questions things instinctively, whose job it is to go out into the world every day and take nothing at face value." Phil Kaufman directed the film on location in San Francisco for producer Robert Solo. Leonard Nimoy co-stars as a psychiatrist who misinterprets the pod invasion. Also featured are Brooke Adams, Veronica Cartwright and Jeff Goldblum.

W. D. Richter talked about writing the new INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS as the film was being finished-up in post-production. Richter is a 1968 graduate of Dartmouth College who landed a job as story analyst at Warner Bros after two years of film study at USC. His first script sale, SLITHER, was the result of writing during lunch hours.

Since the 1956 version of the film is considered a classic, did that affect your writing a remake?

A lot of people didn't think it should be remade. They felt we were idiots, that we were tampering with a classic and that we were sure to make fools of ourselves, demean the original film, whatever. I thought it was a challenge. I knew the risks. But that's fun too, taking chances. The premise is potentially absurd. If somebody's unfamiliar with the story and you try to explain it, what the film's about, you give up pretty fast. It just doesn't read well in synopsis. It's too bizarre.

How did you get involved in the project originally?

I was asked to do a four-week rewrite of the original and I jumped at the opportunity. Bob Solo first had the idea to remake the

film, and Warner Bros envisioned the project as a low budget horror film. But they didn't even have a script of the original. It apparently was lost. I wound up working with a transcript typed from the movie, a timing script. With Finney's novel and the transcript and after viewing the old film, Bob Solo, Phil Kaufman and I began to puzzle out what the story should be like today. It became immediately apparent there was no way I could write the script in four weeks. Actually, the writing never really stopped. I was in San Francisco for the whole shoot, re-writing in a hotel room, feeding pages out to the set. We started the film in October and finished shooting just before Christmas of last year. I'd been working on the script since February, 9 months.

Your first script wasn't set in San Francisco, was it?

No. I wrote an entire draft set in a small town. And then we just decided that was a mistake in 1978. We were still trying to tell a claustrophobic gothic story. Warners saw my first draft, and with what I believe was not much forethought, gave it right back to us in turnaround, and passed on the whole project. Too bad for Warners. We took the same draft to United Artists, and they gave the picture a go right away, small town and all. But we were uncomfortable with the setting. We went back to UA and said we wanted to do the film in a big city. That meant I had to start a brand-new script only six weeks before principal photography began. But it was an important decision. Maybe crucial. The story is far more exciting, more provocative when it plays out in an urban center.

Why did you shift your script from a small town to a big city?

In the early fifties, the small town was still the center of society. The cities were just emerging. If you took over the small towns, then you were conquering the heart and soul of the country. But today, for better or for worse, the energy of America is in our big cities. Chaotic energy, maybe, but at least it's there. It's vital. What I'm saying is this: if aliens were going to attack America today, what good would it do to take over just a small town? The big job would still lie ahead. We felt our audience could easily shrug it off—"So what? Wait till they try to take over New York." I think, on the contrary, in the fifties there was the feeling that if you got the small towns, got people in their own neighborhoods, you had the whole country. It was implied, recall, at the end of the original film that when Santa Mira fell, the cities were going to be a cake walk for the pods. We just thought that would be ridiculous today. How is anybody going to roll over Chicago? We show you how. It's simple, frighteningly simple. It's much easier to destroy people in a city because nobody knows anybody. My neighbor next door might turn into an elephant and I might not realize it until it was too late...and he stepped on my head. By the time people realize that something evil is going on in a city, it's usually

too late to do anything about it. Just think about what is happening in our cities. They're changing right beneath us, collapsing.

What was your original script like?

It was set in a small town and the lead was written for a younger man, a doctor just completing his residency in a large city. He came back to the town he grew up in, to attend his father's funeral. His father, who was also a doctor, had been a vigorous man, only in his fifties, healthy...until he suddenly died of a heart attack. So it was a story about a man who grew up in a small town, went to college in a city and came back to confront the suspicious circumstances of his father's death. The Jack Belli-ccc character in that version was a boyhood friend who'd taken a totally different direction in life, stayed in the town where he grew up. He was more aware of what was happening in town than anyone else. It was a story about boyhood friends, dead parents, cousins, and aunts and uncles and it all began to sound very antiquated. Characters were worrying if their uncles were pods. It seemed irrelevant today. That's what was fundamentally wrong about a small town. Are the Waltons pods? Most of us just don't relate to family groups like that anymore. We're much more concerned about a co-worker or a friend or a lover...people who have much more effect on our daily life.

Let's talk about socio-biology and how it relates to the film?

In the 1970's we can actually make a fairly strong, intelligent case for an organic invasion from outer space. We don't have to resort to a lot of Godzilla double-talk. People have heard about recombinant DNA, about scientists crossing species in the privacy of their own test tubes. There's a lot of whispering going around, monkey business at M.I.T., etc. Scientists are creating viruses out of bacteria, culturing slime molds, turning them into multi-cellular organisms. There are an awful lot of weird, shocking cauldrons bubbling and boiling out there. And our film's just about an environment on another planet that suddenly becomes inhospitable to plants. So they leave. And they come to earth. And their genetic mechanisms look around and decide that the smart thing to do here on earth is not to be a plant and wind up hanging in macrame traction, but rather to be like the dominant species on the planet. Exactly like the dominant species. Because these alien plants just happen to have the ability to turn into anything they want to be. They become a hybrid species. A higher form of plant and a lower form of man, taking characteristics from both species, making a third that happens to look like a person but think like a vegetable.

Are these organisms intelligent?

What's intelligence? They are not acting blindly. As you see in the opening sequence of the film, when they're floating through space as a gelatinous material, fleeing their world, they do seem

Top: Donald Sutherland, as a San Francisco health inspector, examining a pod body found in a mud bath owned by Jeff Goldblum and Veronica Cartwright. Middle: As Sutherland naps in his garden, his pod develops nearby. Bottom: He awakes to destroy the pod before a transformation is complete.

to act purposefully. Maybe you don't see them actually come to a decision to pick the planet earth, but who knows? How do they think? The mass descends, breaks apart in a thunderstorm, and dribbles across San Francisco, a slimy substance, gelatinous, little noticed by people walking around, stepping right on it, a plant life that's been hibernating in the cold of deep space. And so it begins as a single cellular organism. Intelligent? It does do something that's been genetically coded: it grows. It feeds off bacteria to survive. Like a slime mold it throws off spores that begin to feed on dead matter, a leaf, a piece of rotting bark. It's a single celled organism, like an amoeba. But it keeps subdividing, creating more single-celled, self-contained organisms. But then they begin to cluster, to form systems, cooperating in a remarkable way, forming multi-cellular organisms which begin to scheme to survive. One cell begins to function as an arm, another as a feeding apparatus, another as a tiny heart. This happens. It's been documented. This new organism is called a *gex*. A reference to it is made in the film, a wholly new creature that now starts to figure out how the hell it's going to survive. Survival of the fittest. No pity. No compassion. Just genetic determination.

Isn't it unusual for a writer to stay with a film in production?

I really don't think it should be. You have to realize that a writer's responsibility extends beyond the typewriter. Ideas find their way onto film during production, many without their ever having been actually "written" down. But that certainly doesn't mean that the writer isn't needed. On the contrary, in the heat of production, it's often ironically only the writer who's distant enough to remain objective, to keep an overview, an eye to plot and structure. Everyone else is under such pressure once the shooting starts. I think it's healthy to have the writer on hand. But unfortunately, a lot of directors find the writer's presence threatening. But INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS was a delight, a real challenge because we had an exceptionally intelligent group of actors who challenged us at every turn. We'd be about to shoot a scene and somebody would suggest something and we'd stop production, go into a little room and talk it out. I'd try to get it down on paper fast. Sometimes it never got typed. The actors worked from my long-hand pages. I only finished a final typed version of the script two months after the film was finished because while we were shooting I didn't have time to keep the script moving through a typist. It was hectic, turbulent, and a lot of fun. □

by Steve Rubin

WEATHERMAN



Little more than a year ago, John Chavez would have settled for the chance to manage a Taco Bell stand. Today he finds himself presiding over **WEATHERMAN**, an intriguing \$12 million independent film project, due to get underway in just a matter of months.

If this turnaround of career fortunes seems abrupt, please note that Chavez, at 26, has devoted five years to the realization of his dream. "I'm not a filmmaker," explains Chavez. "My background is in Philosophy and Communications. I was practicing future studies (without realizing it—I called it prognostics) before it became fashionable."

The genesis of **WEATHERMAN** occurred several years ago in the office of Linwood Dunn's Film Effects of Hollywood. Chavez had struck up a friendship with the effects veteran and used to spend a good deal of time there. He had recently become especially interested in meteorology, perhaps as a result of his time in the Air Force, and would discuss with Dunn the feasibility and possible methods of rendering complicated weather effects on film. At the time, Chavez envisioned a scenario of a future in which man might actually control the weather, and in which the technology involved could make possible a new and terrible kind of warfare. He quickly discarded the warfare part of the concept as being "TV-movie-ish," belaboring the obvious. (Apparently Stirling **THE SWARM** Silliphant did not find the concept too simplistic, as witness his competing project, **THE WEATHER WAR**.) Chavez decided that more thought and research was called for, and through it all, Linwood Dunn kept urging Chavez to take the story, and a possible film resulting from it very seriously—to start keeping full and thorough notes, rather than just talking it all out. That was Chavez' cue to begin more than two years of all-out research into weather, weather policy, scientific developments, and international law.

Successive drafts of the script began to emerge. Chavez started making the rounds in Hollywood—a long and frustrating process—but did not receive a serious hearing. After a period of involvement of "industry professionals" who led the project around in circles for awhile, Chavez, not quite to the point of giving up, decided that a good literary agent ought to be able to at least get a book out of all the work he had put in. He met Paul Sutherland of the Merritt Agency in San Diego, who introduced him to financial and marketing consultant Lyn Thompson, and the film was soon back on track, with Chavez as producer.

Chavez' script deals with "the ecological, political, and economic considerations of ability to control the weather." The time is the future, but not the distant future. "There aren't any aliens running around, people in togas, or dome cities—that's fantasy." In this fu-

ture world, strong vested interests vie behind the scenes for their own gain, lending a moral dimension to the problem: there is only so much weather to go around.

Arizona space artist Robert T. McCall has already been signed to handle the design concepts of the spectacular weather effects sequences called for in the script. Technical advisor will be Stephen H. Schneider of the National Center for Atmospheric Research. John Dykstra, partnered with other effects artists in Apogee, Inc., is discussing the work involved, but has not been signed. Roy Arbogast, one of those earliest signed for the project (for supervision of physical effects work), is indirectly responsible for bringing in production designer Joe Alves, who is to direct the film. Alves was production designer, and worked with Arbogast, on **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND**. While still in school, Alves assisted Joshua Meador on the animation in **FORBIDDEN PLANET**. In the late sixties, he put in several seasons as art director of **NIGHT GALLERY**, and more recently directed 96 days of second unit shooting on **JAWS II**.

Both Chavez and Alves feel that weather control is not that much of a stretch of the imagination, psychologically or technologically. "A lot of people already suspect that the weather is being played around with," says Alves. "We've had the two worst winters in recent recorded history, preceded by one of the worst droughts we've ever had in California. It wouldn't be too hard to convince people that someone was behind it." Yet, if and when the really fine-grain control ever becomes possible, the potential also exists for ushering in a truly positive turning point for mankind. Observes Chavez: "If we don't blow ourselves off the face of the earth, we are going to have an opportunity to be a part of some of the greatest experiences the human race will ever know."

WEATHERMAN begins production this spring in Africa, New Zealand, and other exotic locales—depending on existing weather conditions. Completion is expected to take at least a year. □

Joe Alves



by Jordan Fox

THE SHOUT



Jerzy Skolimowski

THE SHOUT is a remarkable film from the generally barren British Film Industry, produced by Jeremy Thomas and directed by Jerzy Skolimowski. Shot in six weeks for a half million pounds, this unique film shows us that there are still many facets of the fantasy genre to explore. The film is a stunning example of fantasy filmmaking on a level somewhere between that of THE WICKER MAN and THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, without being derivative of either.

JEREMY THOMAS

I think it's interesting that you liken THE SHOUT to THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, as the style of Jerzy Skolimowski is similar to that of Nicholas Roeg in that they have the same surrealistic quality, using the juxtaposition of scenes with flashbacks. I did try at one stage to get Nick Roeg for the picture, and he liked the subject, but it couldn't be worked out. I also tried to get David Bowie for the music, but nothing came of that either.

I loved Skolimowski's DEEP END [reviewed 1:4:40], and due to his fluency with the English language decided he was a good choice. What I liked was that Skolimowski found the idea of filming the actual physical shout a stimulating one. He shared that aspect with me. I even felt like directing the film myself because devising the shout was very challenging indeed.

JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

I surrendered a lot of my personal themes for the fantasy ones of THE SHOUT. The original Robert Graves story had something to tell us about the psyche. I can go for the distortion of people's minds within the context of a personal statement, but it boils down to what one personally feels the cinema to be about. To most people it is an escape, and I go along with that to a certain degree, but how much more interesting and relevant is the description of cinema as a dream house, primarily to make us think within those fantasies.

THE SHOUT is based on a
by Mike Childs
and Alan Jones

little-known novella by Robert Graves. The story unfolds from the viewpoint of Charles Crossley (Alan Bates), a seemingly intelligent and articulate inmate of a rural lunatic asylum in England. During the ritual of an annual cricket match between the inmates and the local villagers, Crossley tells Robert Graves (Tim Curry) of his ability to kill with a shout, a skill learned after living for twelve years with an aboriginal tribe in Australia and absorbing their culture. The new Dolby Optical Stereo Sound System was used for the picture to enhance one's awareness of sound and create anticipation for the shout.

JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

Most people think the Dolby system belongs to films like STAR WARS. But the danger is that these big budget films overuse it, and overuse becomes dull. But that is the moneymen for you. Once that sort of luxury item is budgeted into the picture they want their money's worth. THE SHOUT is the first medium budget picture to use the system and we used it only as a sense experience. The film was calculated along those lines.

I had no idea what I wanted for the actual sound of the shout itself, but I knew I had a strong hand of cards to play. I was cutting the film by day and learning about electronic gadgets by night. After you hear a sound more than five times you lose the ability to judge it. I had to know instinctively what I wanted, something to impress the audience when the actual shout scene arrived in the film, something they would anticipate being knocked-out by. We used forty different tracks for the effect, all a melange of extremes, but you definitely hear the human voice.

JEREMY THOMAS

We wanted the shout to be basically humanoid. We didn't want anything electronic, though we did have to pass it through a lot of machinery to make it as loud as it is. The impact it has is quite extraordinary. I think you'll agree it gives the film a third dimension.

At first, Sensurround was suggested, but that seemed totally unsuitable for the type of picture we were doing. And using Dolby garnered us some publicity and attention due to the fact that we were the first British film to use the new system. The movies are only now realizing the importance of sound in a picture, which is incredible when you think how long we've had sound.

THE SHOUT climaxes during a thunderstorm with the death of three people, including Crossley himself. Were the deaths of natural causes, or was Crossley demonstrating proof of his power? The enigmatic script by Michael Austin, written in collaboration with Graves, is open to many interpretations. Do we believe the story that Crossley tells Graves about influencing the lives and loves of nearby village residents, particularly Anthony (John Hurt) and

his wife Rachel (Susannah York)?

JEREMY THOMAS

There is a basic level that the film works on which everybody should understand. Then there is a secondary level which is available to a more perceptive person. A third level represents the embroidery of aspects that seemed to make the film a more cohesive work, like the Francis Bacon symbolism. But none of this interferes with the basic narrative. The fact that the ending is unresolved, makes the film a talking point for days afterwards. The ending is either a bolt of lightning that killed the three people, or the shout. But if it's only lightning, why does Susannah York, the nurse Bates has been fantasizing about, come back to reclaim the sandal buckle which she gave him? Does she want this token back because she does believe in the shout and doesn't want it going to the grave with Crossley?

JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

I used the script as a painter would a canvas. I wanted a certain personal balance. I put the Shakespeare into the final scenes—the lunatic running around the scoring hut at the climax quoting "Macbeth." I used a lot of what I wanted to say in my own words and I also took a lot of inspiration from the work of Francis Bacon. Even though I find a lot of his work repulsive, he gave me an understanding of the meaning of life. He is in touch with reality—I wanted to open up a new field of cinematic imagination. The line spoken by the Chief Medical Officer: "See that tree? It's normal. But see that tree? It's mad."—I added that sort of psychology.

JEREMY THOMAS

After literally dozens of other producers turned Michael Austin down, he came to me and asked me to read THE SHOUT. And as soon as I had, I wanted to make it. I was attracted by the fact that it was totally different from anything I'd ever read, based on a short story that is by, arguably, our greatest living writer, Robert Graves. Now that the film is done, I can't think of anything to compare it with. Skolimowski, being Polish, gives it an interesting approach that makes it all the more unusual.

The only change from the Robert Graves story is that John Hurt's character was a classical pianist and composer and not an electronic wizard who plays with sound. The original story was only 7000 words, and Robert Graves cut it down to 5000 words at the behest of his editor back in 1928. Austin collaborated with Graves and asked if he could remember the cuts, which he couldn't, being such a long time ago. There was another ending for the picture. Graves (Tim Curry) points the bone at Anthony (John Hurt) and says "You knew him!" But the way it was shot echoed CARRIE, and ultimately would have cheapened the denouement.

JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI

THE SHOUT was a chance for

Top: Alan Bates who stars as the apparent lunatic Crossley, and producer Jeremy Thomas (right). Middle: Crossley (top) proves to Anthony (John Hurt) that he has the power of the shout. Bottom: As a madman (James Broadbent) proceeds to push the scoring hut around the pitch during a storm, Robert Graves (Tim Curry) senses imminent danger and escapes before disaster strikes.

me to put together great literature, great acting and great sound, although the latter was decided upon later. The story is fifty years old now. Robert Graves was the same age then as I am now, so I liked the challenge of daring to be the interpreter of his, and my own, recognition of what lunatics are about. It was also a chance to smuggle the impossible into total reality. THE SHOUT is the first of a new kind of film, one that uses the most of all your senses.

Skolimowski was born in Poland in 1936. His producer, Jeremy Thomas, at 28, is one of the youngest in Britain. Their production of THE SHOUT, which also features Robert Stephens (Billy Wilder's Sherlock Holmes) among an unusually strong British cast, scored strongly at the Cannes Film Festival this year, and has been picked up for release in the U.S. by Libra Films.

JEREMY THOMAS

The script was the reason we got all our first choices for the cast. We did have pressure on us at one stage to have an American star, which would have made the film totally unrealistic. When will backers realize that the British film industry's future lies in British films and not in some curious hybrid attempt to pander to American tastes? Rank Distributors are at least trying here, and I give credit to them for backing our film. Our other backers threw up their arms in horror when they saw the completed film. "What have you done to us," they all yelled in unison. They are somewhat mollified by the Cannes acceptance and the general enthusiasm that has greeted the picture.

Thomas describes himself as "a total fantasy freak." He is the son of director Ralph Thomas, and became an assistant film editor at the age of 17. Thomas assisted Ray Harryhausen with the effects on GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD in 1974, and produced his first film, MAD DOG, two years later. After producing chores on FLASH GORDON, for Dino De Laurentiis, he plans to do a film with Nicholas Roeg called ILLUSION. "Then," says Thomas, "I've got a script I'm developing called JOURNEY INTO THE BLACK HOLE. I want Philippe Mora to direct it for me, as he did on MAD DOG, and I want to put my experience with Harryhausen to work and include some stop-motion animation. I've already got the cooperation of NASA on this. Science fiction is now a trend that is here to stay. At last, after all, we are in the space age. □



continued from page 25 and depiction of an advanced alien race. Loxton is discussing the effects work with Motion Pictures, Inc., the company set up by Robert Blalack and Jamie Shourt following their work on STAR WARS.

Principal photography will be done in and around Houston, Texas, with second unit work in Portland, Oregon, the setting of the novel. Loxton stresses that THE LATHE OF HEAVEN will be a departure from conventional television "sci-fi" like BATTLE-STAR GALACTICA in its attempt to showcase the philosophical, sociopolitical and dramatic aspects of the genre. If successful, the show will result in a PBS series, the science fiction equivalent of "Masterpiece Theatre," devoted to dramatizing major works by the leading authors in the field.

Peter S. Perakos

CHILDHOOD'S END Hits Legal Snag

Universal Television's plans to produce Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* as the most expensive telefilm in history, have hit a legal snag which throws the project's future into question. George Litto Productions held the feature film rights to the classic science fiction novel for several years, but was

never able to secure financing. How the television rights passed to Universal is unclear, however, Arthur C. Clarke is reportedly suing Universal to block the production for television. Speculation is that Clarke would profit more from his work being made as a big-budget feature film.

Jordan R. Fox

VORTEX Stop Motion Effects

Live action sequences for the new Charles Band production, VORTEX, have been completed and special effects post-production is now underway. Steve Neill, who created Leonard Nimoy's Spock ears for the new STAR TREK film, wrote VORTEX and designed several mutant-type creatures for the film. A capable effects team headed by Paul Gentry will be creating several sequences involving stop motion figures. The screenplay concerns an area like the Bermuda Triangle which has been dormant for millions of years, and is now activated by a supernova. The main characters are caught in this zone, blinking in and out of different worlds inhabited by weird life forms. John Bud Cardos (KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS) directed the film, shot in wide-screen Panavision.

Paul Mandell

Anne McCaffrey's DECISION AT DOONA to be filmed by producer Gary Youngman

Anne McCaffrey's *Decision At Doona* (Ballentine Books, \$1.75) will be filmed by independent producer Gary Youngman. Anne McCaffrey will work closely with a screenwriter, as yet unsigned, in adapting her novel for filming. The story is set in the future, when an overcrowded, socially repressive Earth has developed interstellar travel. The first human contact with an extraterrestrial race, the Siwannese, ended in tragedy: the aliens committed mass suicide! Earthmen then set forth a decree: any contact with another sentient life form is forbidden. But the survey of the lush planet Doona revealed no inhabitants, and so colonists like Kenneth Reeve, his wife Pat and their young children, Ilsa and Todd arrive. Several months later, to their horror, they discover a race of cat-like creatures. To the earthmen, the "cats" seem primitive, nomadic hunters. Tentative contact is established. Yet there are some puzzles—how did they elude the survey? How can primitive people grasp difficult and abstract mathematical concepts? The terans have three choices: leave Doona to return to a hellish earth; kill the Hrrubans, as the cats call themselves; or defy the edict, and try to coexist in peace.

"One day I want to see us reach the stars and live with other races in peace," Yougman philosophizes about the project. "I want to see us live in peace on earth, too. And the nature of this film is that, although it is set in the future, it reflects upon the current situation on earth. The special effects won't be the im-

portant part of the film. The important part will be the characters. Reeve's son, six year old Todd, is the key to the whole story. And the important part is the message, revealed through the characters. In these respects, DECISION AT DOONA is similar to THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. Visual effects will aid in the story telling, as did Klaatu's spaceship and the robot Gort, powerful in the simplicity of their design. The acting, the directing, the power of Anne's words, and what will happen when these elements are juxtaposed—these will be important."

Youngman, whose past experience lies in commercials, will direct as well as produce.

Peter Perakos

McCaffrey & Youngman



DAWN OF THE DEAD



Dario Argento & George Romero

The whole thing was announced, on November 21, 1977, in fact, after shooting had begun, with very little fanfare, although in the realm of *cinéfantastique* it has the potential of becoming one of the most interesting projects of the year. Simply, George Romero and Dario Argento were combining their talents to make a "continuation" of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD.

The project comes at an excellent time in both directors' careers. Romero had just finished MARTIN, a modern-day vampire tale, which had sold its foreign rights like hotcakes at the 1977 Cannes Festival and had been taken for American release by Libra Films (who had attempted to revive Romero's THE CRAZIES in 1976). Rumor had it that the film marked a turn in Romero's style toward a more visually accomplished picture—less nightmare, more dream. Argento had just come off SUSPIRIA, his first film since DEEP RED, a tremendous U.S. hit, although distributor 20th Century-Fox refused to put their name on it (while gladly grabbing all its boxoffice dollars) and unearthed a subsidiary corporation to "officially" distribute it. The film's content may have been tired, but Argento's opulent styling and frenetic pacing, the special effects setpieces, satisfactory performances, and pounding stereo soundtrack all propelled it nicely to a conclusion we no longer cared was hackneyed. SUSPIRIA was fun and scary.

Argento is a thin, pale, almost desiccated figure who looks, like a lot of film buffs, as if he hasn't seen the sun in a long while. At a press reception, he explains that he is very excited about the film and working with Romero, that he is not helping to direct but will be solely responsible for its soundtrack, laying in all the sound effects and composing the score. He and his brother Claudio are backers in the production.

Romero is fully-bearded, his hair longish. Up close his eyes betray a tiredness. You can see he's been working long and hard on the film, probably a lot during the day, planning for the next evening,

by David Bartholomew

during the current bout of night shooting. I ask how DAWN OF THE DEAD will be different from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD?

"It's much more open, more of a high action film, which is why I resist calling it a sequel. It's not so much *that* as Part 2 of a conceptual trilogy. The zombie phenomenon continues, but it is much bigger. NIGHT is a '40's horror film, made in the '60's. DAWN is a '60's film, made in the '70's." Romero laughs.

"I resisted for a long while doing anything at all with it, although I had always conceived it loosely from Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. When I made THE CRAZIES, a lot of the ideas I'm dealing with here got in *there*, because I never really thought I'd ever get into this project. It is completely different in tone than NIGHT. It's a hoot 'n' holler, a comic book, more like THE CRAZIES than NIGHT in style."

At Romero's side is producer Richard Rubenstein, a tall, youngish-looking man, soft-spoken yet forceful. He speaks deliberately and doesn't smile too much but is quite friendly. Rubenstein looks like a great deal-maker.

"George left NIGHT open, that although the main characters themselves didn't make it, human society appeared to be in control, the sheriff was out there cleaning things up. This one will leave you feeling not really sure at all, that society is even operative any longer. The third film Dario calls, of course, exaggerating it, ZOMBIES IN THE WHITE HOUSE. At the end of DAWN, you begin to see the glimmers of the zombies gaining some level of intelligence." Rubenstein folds his hands, smiling.

I mention that reports of their budget put it at about \$400,000, but Rubenstein would not confirm it although he suggests that if the same film were being made in Hollywood (read "union") it would cost about \$2 million. As they did on MARTIN, they are prepared to take an X-rating for violence. Occasionally Rubenstein talks like a producer: "There's no doubt that the blood flows faster and freer in this picture than it ever has before."

Romero connected with Argento on the project through a mutual friend, Alfred Cuomo, who also acts as associate producer on film, in Rome. Cuomo showed Romero's treatment for the film to Argento, and since each knew and respected the other's work, the collaboration was born. Romero finished writing the screenplay in Rome, consulting with Argento on the conceptual basis, and not specifics. Shooting on the film began November 13, 1977 at the Monroeville Mall in Pennsylvania, setting for much of the action, broke for Christmas, and wound-up in February after resuming January 3.

Tom Savini, who is handling both cosmetic special effects and makeup for the film, is going to make me up as a ghoul extra for the days shooting, a bit of fun most willing reporters are subjected to while visiting the production. Savini is 31 and doesn't look it, a native Pittsburgher who is self-taught. His feature work includes two films for director Bob Clark: DERANGED and DEAD OF NIGHT (sparsely distributed here but shown on TV as DEATHDREAM). Savini specializes in gore while leaving the

Scenes from DAWN OF THE DEAD, an incredibly gory reprise of Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, makeup by Tom Savini. Middle: Romero directs author David Bartholomew (right), who got to be a ghoul for a day. [Photo ©1978 Jody Caravaglia]

more mundane chores—gun-shot wounds and simple scars—and the overall greenish-grey zombie makeup to his assistants.

After forty-five minutes in the makeup chair I am finished. I must have been originally "killed" with an axe, for Savini, with mortician's wax and other materials, has constructed a trough that spurts over my left eye, winds down the right side of my nose, splitting part of it off, and on down to my mouth. The inside of this trench is painted with black "clotting" blood, to simulate rotting flesh. Then after the basic ghoul makeup is applied to my face, neck and hands, Savini tilts my head back and pours liquid blood (by 3M) down the trough and over my face and into my shirt. I look at myself in the mirror. I am pleased.

On the set, producer Rubenstein eyes the improvement in my appearance and explains how the owner of the Monroeville Mall got a kick out of playing a chubby ghoul himself. "The people we've been using keep coming back. Some are even bringing their kids along to play ghouls. They practice their zombie walks and then sack out in sleeping bags until the shot is ready, then their parents wake them up."

Assistant director Christine Forrest begins to give instructions to the ghoul contingent: "Give us a slow, stiff walk. Blank expressions. People with glasses, take them off—zombies would have lost theirs a long time ago. Remember, don't focus your eyes on anything." Romero joins her. "Also, don't react to noise, and there will be a lot of it. Remember, humans are food, so *look hungry*. You can do pretty much what you want, otherwise. Just don't get run over by the camera cart."

I crib a halting walk from Lon Chaney, Jr. in his Mummy pictures, one arm outstretched. Without my glasses, I can't focus my eyes anyway. I appear in the background of a set-piece involving a melee between bikers and ghouls in front of a "crafts fair" teepee that collapses on cue, Romero squats in a ball on the floor, filming second camera. The night's shooting wraps around 6:30 AM. It's still dark out, and I'm tired. In a short while, it will be quite literally a dawn of the dead, as the crew breaks.

I talked with Rubenstein again, in New York in May. Romero is sending the assembled picture, reel by reel, to Argento in Rome, for completion of the soundtrack. Romero has just finished the rough cut, 173 minutes, and hopes to pare it down to 2 or 2½ hours.

The film opened in Italy September 9, in Rome, Florence and Bologna, and outgrossed all competition. Titled ZOMBIE by Argento, and accompanied by his sense-pounding stereo track, the strength of the Italian openings has made the film a sought-after property for the U.S. and Canadian market. While still fine-tuning the cutting, and working on his own soundtrack, Romero is very high on the film's prospects and expects to make his best distribution deal ever. □

Disney's SPACE PROBE underway.

The Disney studio is immersed in the most heavily fantasy-oriented production slate in years. Projects include a multi-million dollar science fiction film, *SPACE PROBE*, an animated cartoon feature and plans for what may prove to be the major *Sword & Sorcery* event of the next decade, *THE BLACK CAULDRON* (see separate article, page 35).

Cameras began to roll mid-July on *THE SPACEMAN AND KING ARTHUR* using English locations. The contemporary adaptation of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* involves a 20th century engineer (Dennis Dugan) who travels back in time to Camelot when his spaceship malfunctions. His modern technology helps the legendary King (Ron Moody) defeat the evil Mordred, played by Jim Dale who was conning Dr. Terminus in *PETE'S DRAGON*.

The popularity of *STAR WARS* induced Disney to produce their own space epic, *SPACE PROBE*, which had been in the planning stages for a number of years. Miniature work began filming on a closed set in August and first unit work begins in October. Set construction is underway, with the space craft's engine room nearing completion. Production will eventually tie-up all four sound stages on the Disney lot. The screenplay by Jeb Rosebrook and Gerry Day involves a search for life in another galaxy. An expedition finds a derelict space ship near a black hole. Their discovery aboard the ship and their fight to escape the gravitational sink of the black hole form the basis for the film's spectacular climax. *SPACE PROBE* is scheduled for release late in 1979.

HERO FROM OTHERWHERE will combine live action with cartoon animation. Details of the project are sketchy as it is only now in the early planning stage. Animation and special effects will create the eerie settings and atmosphere of "otherwhere," an alternate dimension where two boys of differing character must cooperate to save the world.

THE HEALER is now in post-production, a two-hour TV movie about a teenager who is able to spiritually enter the body of a wolf. In this guise he unravels the mystery surrounding the killing of animals on his uncle's farm. Other TV projects include: *SNOW STAR*, a space fantasy by Oscar Saul and Louis Lantz which is an update of Snow White—with seven robots. *THE CRIME FIGHTERS* involves a pair of down at the heels private eyes who have their fortunes changed when they find a mysterious pack of matches which invoke the spirit of the great Sherlock Holmes. *MIRACLE MAX* is about a man sent to Hades who is given a chance to escape by the Devil if he can provide three new souls to take his place. He tries to recruit two teenagers and a seven year-old boy. *A WATCHER IN THE WOODS* is a TV movie combining the supernatural with science fiction. A teenage girl and her family are threatened by a mysterious force, but under the surveillance of an extraterrestrial they manage to solve a fifty year-old puzzle.

And Disney's animation department is busier than ever with fantasy projects that will carry them into the mid-1980s (see page 35).
Dan Scapperotti





Ralph Bakshi

"WIZARDS came out of my love of comic books more than anything else. What I wanted to do with LORD OF THE RINGS was develop another level of animation—realistic animation. Get away from the WIZARDS cartoon look, or the look of any of my other films, and try to reach a level of painting in animation. That was very important to me. The goal was quality—to bring realistic artists to animation."

With that in mind, Ralph Bakshi, animation's maverick filmmaker, set about to capture on film a dream he had had for twenty years—to make an animated film version of J. R. R. Tolkien's epic *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Bakshi's interest in making a film of the Tolkien fantasy saga dated back to his first reading of the volumes in 1956. He subsequently tried to convince Terrytoons, his employer at the time, to do a Tolkien picture, but found that the screen rights were already tied up. Had he been more successful, Bakshi would have been painting cels on the Terrytoon project. Instead, two decades later, he is directing outright an army of some six hundred artists in providing what may be the most ambitious animation film of all time.

Somewhere Bakshi got the idea that the *Lord of the Rings* property was once owned or optioned by Walt Disney Productions during the fifties, a story he was fond of repeating in interviews which were widely reported, until the Disney legal department pointed out that it had no basis in fact. Bakshi was originally hired to animate LORD OF THE RINGS by Daniel Melnick at MGM in late 1975. When the project collapsed, Bakshi took it to producer Saul Zaentz, who put together the more than \$7,000,000 budget required through his Fantasy Films company, a subsidiary of Fantasy Records.

Very early on, Bakshi realized that earlier efforts by other producers to develop a workable script from the Tolkien novels had failed because attempts to condense the *Lord of the Rings* saga into a two-

hour feature had so truncated the narrative that its basic appeal had been sacrificed. During the project's brief history at MGM, Bakshi planned a feature film for each volume in the trilogy in order to be faithful to the intricate Tolkien storyline. When the project was revived at Fantasy Films, two 2½ hour films were decided on. After three years of preparation and production, the first of the two is now complete and scheduled for distribution in major cities by United Artists on November 15. LORD OF THE RINGS will open nationwide on December 20. Voices for the film were recorded in England, and Bakshi shunned the use of stars or well-known voice personalities. The film's musical score is composed by Leonard Rosenman.

The first drafts of the screenplay were written by Tolkien scholar Chris Conkling and were subsequently revised and polished by Peter S. Beagle. Bakshi's affection for the 1500-page trilogy and his sensitivity to Tolkien's vast cult following made him very cautious in editing or changing the novels. "The picture follows the books pretty much in chronological order. Things had to be dropped that I thought weren't necessary. Tom Bombadil was dropped because he didn't push the story along. Lots of descriptions were dropped—things were shortened. But I think I was faithful to the books.

"The absolute biggest challenge was maintaining the spirit of the story—focusing high for highs in the film, and low for lows. That's always the filmmaker's challenge, and you can't draw that. Everybody keeps hitting me with 'How's a hobbit going to look?' Well, that's not that important. I mean, one million people can do one million different versions of a hobbit. What's important, other than the quality and love that Tolkien put into it and the energy he provides, is that the story is intact. The tendency for animators is to just worry about the drawings. But there's still a film to be made, and it's got to hold together whether the drawings are good or bad."

Bakshi felt that Tolkien's narrative, though epic fantasy in form, had a sustained underlying realism about it that standard animating techniques could not adequately capture. He found the solution to his problem in his previous production.

"Although the whole thing is different, it started with about fifteen seconds in WIZARDS that really worked. It was a sequence we rotoscoped from live-action, and even though it was just black silhouettes, when those horses came overhead, I really got excited." It was Bakshi's footage from WIZARDS, that originally got the ball rolling and convinced MGM that the Tolkien project could be filmed in animation on a mammoth scale at reasonable costs.

Bakshi began rotoscoping—hand-drawing animated images from live-action projections—a number of sequences for LORD OF THE RINGS, and was so taken with the results that he decided to scrap all previous footage and do the entire picture in the rotoscope process, even though several months of standard animation was already completed. In essence, he had to shoot the entire picture live-action and then rotoscope each and every

frame.

"Most directors, they shoot something and they edit it, and they're finished. Not me. I've just started. It's crazy—schizophrenic. I don't think anyone's ever shot an entire live action movie to end up with an animated feature. All rotoscope in the past has been used in a few scenes only, and at that exaggerated—the live action was exaggerated in the shooting or the animator exaggerated the rotoscope itself. In LORD OF THE RINGS, I shot the entire film live, in costume—every scene. The action was designed not to be exaggerated; it was designed to capture the action in realism and motion.

"But it's the most realistic animation I've ever seen. We have cels with a thousand people on them. There are scenes where we panned by rows of orcs [Tolkien's equivalent of goblins]—hundreds of them, all at different levels. In live action, naturally, the background moves slower than the foreground, and when those scenes were rotoscoped, it really freaked me out. I went crazy. From the very first shot, you could see the difference. There's the flight to the ford where Frodo's horse comes right over your head. There're some very strange things that I can't quite understand—new things that happen when you trace each frame exactly. We had one scene where the orcs were standing on a ridge and a big gust of wind came up and rippled their cloaks and the shadows. And it was staggering in animation. That small touch of believability nearly knocked me off my chair, simply because you don't ever think of those things in animation. Those accidents began to happen and it was quite exciting."

Much of the live action footage was shot on Hollywood sound stages with actors dressed in full costume, but without sets of any consequence. More often than not, the actors simply performed against a white backdrop with ladders, chairs and other handy fixtures serving as rocks, trees, and other portions of the animated frame which were being derived from Tolkien's descriptions and rendered by Bakshi's background artists. More than ten thousand painted backgrounds were employed, as compared to the several hundred to a thousand customary in most animated features. Large-scale live action footage was also shot in the California deserts; and a castle in Spain set the stage for the Helm's Deep battle sequence that climaxes the first feature.

For Bakshi, his three-year involvement in LORD OF THE RINGS is the fulfillment of a long-standing dream. As an animator he wanted to do something very special for it visually; but as a long-time devotee of the novels, he did not wish to do so at the expense of Tolkien's narrative. "The energy and love that you bring to a film is more important than intellectualizing about it with an 'I'm going to make it better than the book' attitude. I just hope that I don't get so carried away in technique that I lose what vitality there might be in sitting and reading the book. You know, a perfect illustration is really boring. The golden age of comics showed us that certain things can get too slick. But I think LORD OF THE RINGS was done with honesty. I'm very proud and happy to have done it, and I feel very confident I've done it well." □

by Scott Bruce

DISNEY SWORD & SORCERY

THE BLACK CAULDRON is on the drawing boards at Walt Disney Productions as the cartoon feature to follow in production after completion of THE FOX AND THE HOUND, currently in the works. Property is an original Sword & Sorcery fantasy in the tradition of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and is part of an effort at Disney to change the studio's "For Kids Only" image.

Disney's roots are strongest in the animated cartoon field, but the studio has seen its pool of creative artists dwindle as the pioneering animators, the veterans who created such classics as SNOW WHITE & THE 7 DWARFS and BAMBI, retire and leave the field. A shortage of qualified animators as well as the tremendous labor costs involved in their work forced Ralph Bakshi to depend almost entirely on rotoscoping for LORD OF THE RINGS. Disney, however, has reinstated a training program for young animators, to assure the qualified manpower necessary for their animated film program.

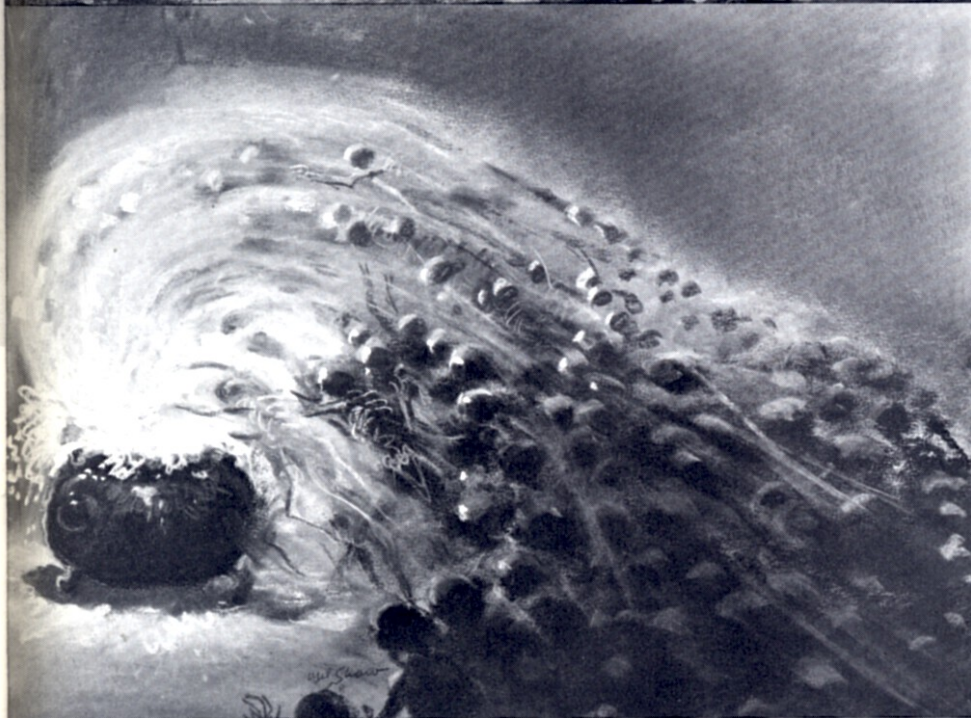
Preproduction art for THE BLACK CAULDRON indicates that much of the film will rely on a pervading atmosphere of horror and the mystic arts, with forboding settings reminiscent of the studio's early cartoon work such as THE SKELETON DANCE and THE OLD MILL, and the Evil Queen's dungeon in SNOW WHITE. The cauldron of the title is in the possession of the evil Horned King who emerges his vanquished enemies in it to transform them into invincible, soulless Cauldron Born Warriors. With this army of the dead the Horned King plans to conquer the peaceful land of Prydain. He is opposed by Dallben, a wise enchanter and Taran, his young ward.

THE BLACK CAULDRON will entirely be the work of a new generation of Disney artists and technicians. The studio's previous cartoon feature, the immensely popular THE RESCUERS, was the last to depend on the talents of the veteran animators. Eric Larson, a 45-year Disney veteran, is in charge of the studio's training program for new animators. From thousands of applications received for their training program, less than 100 were selected for Disney apprenticeship, and only 45 completed the full course. The first effort to feature solely the work of the new animators is THE SMALL ONE, a 25 minute featurette to be released this December with PINOCCHIO. Its Christmas story tells of a young boy in ancient Nazareth who is forced to sell his beloved donkey.

THE FOX AND THE HOUND won't be released until 1980. The lengthy production schedule reflects the pains taken for fuller, more fluid animation and an attention to detail for which Disney is famous. Then work begins on the animation of THE BLACK CAULDRON, which won't see release until 1984. □

Preproduction art for Disney's THE BLACK CAULDRON by Mel Shaw. The evil Horned King (top) uses the cauldron of the title to create an army of invincible, soulless warriors (middle). He is opposed by the good enchanter Dallben and his companions (bottom).

by Dan Scapperotti



RECORDED LIVE

While in the Army, I was stationed stateside in a closed circuit TV center. One of the more interesting jobs we GI's had there was discarding worn out video tape. This we did by spinning it off its reels into a large pile. If officers were scarce, we'd amuse ourselves by frolicking in the pile. That's when I got the idea for a Videotape Monster. A few years later, in 1975, while a graduate student in the USC Cinema Dept, the idea resurfaced to become an 8 minute 16mm short, RECORDED LIVE.

A budget which could not exceed \$750 called for a short film with a simple plot: A man, Ames, gets a written invitation for a job interview at a TV station. The station turns out to be in an old, strange house. There Ames finds some clothes draped over a chair, but no people. He is attacked and pursued by the videotape. He wins a momentary stay of execution when he discovers that he can ward off the tape with a magnet, but ultimately meets his end when the tape burrows under the carpet and ambushes him from below. The tape then types out a new interview request to be mailed to the next victim.

The part of the hapless interviewee was filled by fellow student John Goodwin, a kindred spirit whom I approached when I saw him carrying a copy of Ray Harryhausen's *Film Fantasy Scrapbook*. John understood the problems of interacting with an imaginary entity and worked hard to project and maintain the feeling that something was really after him. His co-star came from ABC television in Hollywood. Like the Army, I figured a network would accumulate worn out tape and sure enough, when I inquired, they gladly gave me a carload.

Animation of the tape fell into two categories: animation of individual tentacles (as I came to call them), and animation of the whole pile. Two inch videotape is

very thin and flexible. I knew that it would become crinkled and ratty looking after long use, so I cut about 100 feet off the main pile (about 7000 feet in all) and set this aside to keep it cosmetically perfect for closeups.

Where a tentacle had to have the strength to hold something up (like a brass door key the tape uses to lock Ames in a room) I attached armature wire to the tape's off-camera side with small loops of adhesive tape. When a tentacle needed only to be suspended like a snake, I supported it with monofilament fishing line.

Animating the main body of the tape was a peculiar experience. Since all the animation was full scale, the incremental movements were sometimes in inches per frame, instead of the fractions normally encountered in such work. There were also problems to be solved in controlling the movement of the tables, chairs, and other large objects with which the tape interacted. Sometimes, the tape was hard to work with simply because it took up so much room. The tape so completely filled the hallway of my four person apartment that it blocked access to the bathroom. I soon received a request that I shoot hallway shots only between 12:00 midnight and 5:00 AM.

The animation is hardly that of the established masters, but I do like to think I got some character into the tape. This was part of the challenge in doing the film. I have always held that character in an animated subject is a function of *action*, not shape. Even though the tape was about as non-humanoid as it could be, I felt that it could still perform actions which would indicate emotion and intelligence. For example, the tape rips out a phone cord to prevent its prey from calling for help, then haughtily spins the cord in flaunting its superiority. Later, when frightened by the magnet, it shakes and shivers, and turns inward on itself in retreating.

I relied primarily on intercutting to "combine" live and animated action. Originally, I had intended to do some composites with simple split screen mattes in the school's optical printer. But I shot the composite elements too late to schedule time on the printer within the shooting deadline; production management was not one of my strong points (the film was done as an individual project in which one person had to do all major production tasks).

Still, I wanted at least a few shots in which tape and man were seen together, so I experimented with two other techniques. One approach was simply to animate the actor with the tape. I limited the technique to short closeups involving only parts of John's body, selecting positions in which it would be easy for him to hold still. None of the shots took more than 30 minutes to animate. One instance (where the tape wrapped around his head), I "animated" his eyes. I placed a chart off camera with points marked on it which corresponded to frame numbers. When I was ready to expose frame No 5, I'd tell him to

shift his gaze to point No 5, and so on. This insured that his eyes would not jiggle uncontrollably in the projected footage.

A second technique for combining tape action with live action was to shoot in reverse. Eventually, several shots were done in this way (tape blocking Ames' escape down stairway, squeezing through door jamb cracks, climbing stairs, etc). Since the vintage Kodak Cine Special at my disposal was not designed to run in reverse, it was necessary to shoot double perf film with the camera upside down, so that the film could later be cut in backwards without flopping the image left to right. Of course, all the action then had to be performed in reverse. John got quite good at acting backwards, achieving such subtleties as reverse doubletakes.

The most complex reverse shot was one in which the tape, fearful of Ames' magnet, grabs a door and slams it shut. John had to jerk the door open without making any body movement which would tip off the reversed action. Almost simultaneously then, assistant Judy Wachtel, hidden off camera in the tape, yanked adhesive taped tentacles off the door. Projected backwards, the shot shows tentacles flying up, grabbing the door, and pulling it shut. Jude and John perfected it all in just two takes.

A scene in which Ames throws a trash can at the tape only to have it thrown back angrily took five hours to animate, not including set-up time. I shot the live action first, so I could match the flight positions of the can and determine how fast it should travel. The can was hung on monofilament wire running from a cluster of 8mm 50 ft film spools. The spool cluster could be moved as a unit along a simple track above the can's flight path. In order to better match the live action, I blurred the can's image by doing a ten second time exposure on each frame, letting the can swing gently during exposure. The animation flickers a little because I had to do the time exposure by hand, turning the Cine Special's single-frame drive shaft while eyeing my wristwatch. (The film is remarkably flicker free, otherwise, considering that all the animation was done using the Special's spring-wound motor.) The blur effect worked well, but to my dismay, the footage came back *green*! Due to a characteristic of color film called "reciprocity failure," the emulsion layers can respond unevenly to long exposures. Fortunately, the laboratory was able to correct the color in printing, so that it matches the preceding and following shots of John.

Much of the six month production time was spent in editing the picture and creating sound. The film's fast pace can be attributed directly to faculty advisors Trevor Greenwood and Gene Coe. I had cut it to ten minutes. They coerced me to reduce it to nine; then they insisted I cut another *minute*! I practically had to be dragged screaming to the editing table. But the film is immeasurably better for having lost those two

At the end of RECORDED LIVE, the videotape proofreads its letter to the next victim. The tape is braced underneath with armature wire. 2: Steve Wilson animates the videotape as it pulls a telephone junction box from the wall. Wilson filmed in 16mm using a vintage Kodak Cine Special while a student at USC. 3: The triumphant videotape tentacle swings the junction box in a taunting gesture, signaling that it has cut off any means of rescue for its intended victim. 4: Wilson animates the videotape as it envelops and consumes its victim. A full-size wood and wire armature replaced the actor for this disappearing act. Left: Victim John Goodwin acts in reverse for an action shot in which the tape grabs the door and pulls it shut. Wilson mounts camera upside down to reverse action during editing.

excess minutes.

Since all footage was shot wild (that is, no sound recorded on location), all sound was created later. The music is by George Winston, who improvised it while watching the film, working from cryptic notes made during earlier screenings. The general chattering sound the tape makes is mostly myself and a few friends; I altered our voices on a tape deck with variable speed. Other tape sounds I generated by modifying effects in USC's sound library: bullet ricochets, seals underwater, dry ice on metal (the screeching sound the tape makes when touched by the magnet), cartoon effects, and what not. I tried everything; the muffled sound of the tape under the carpet I got by playing the magnetic film through its base.

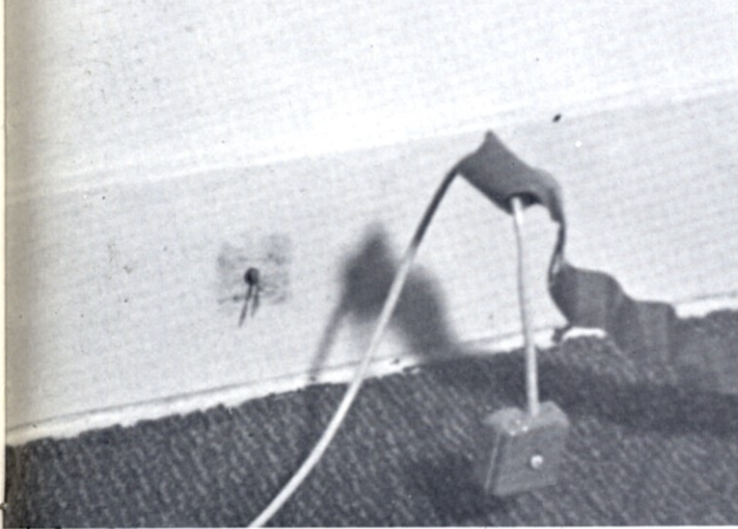
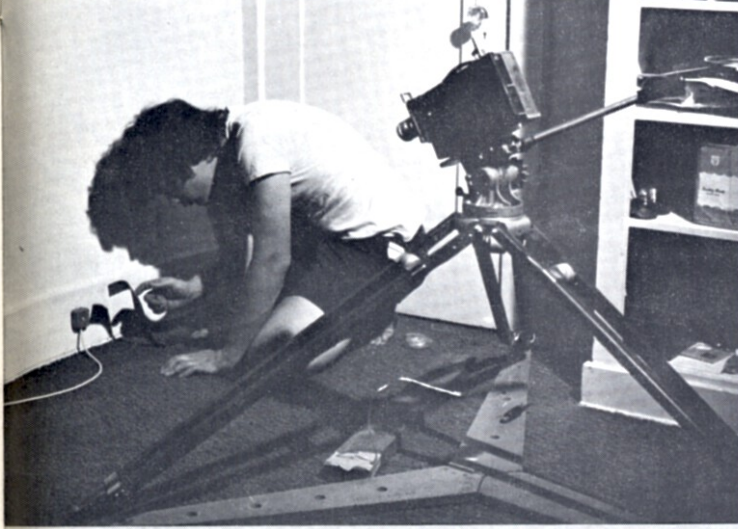
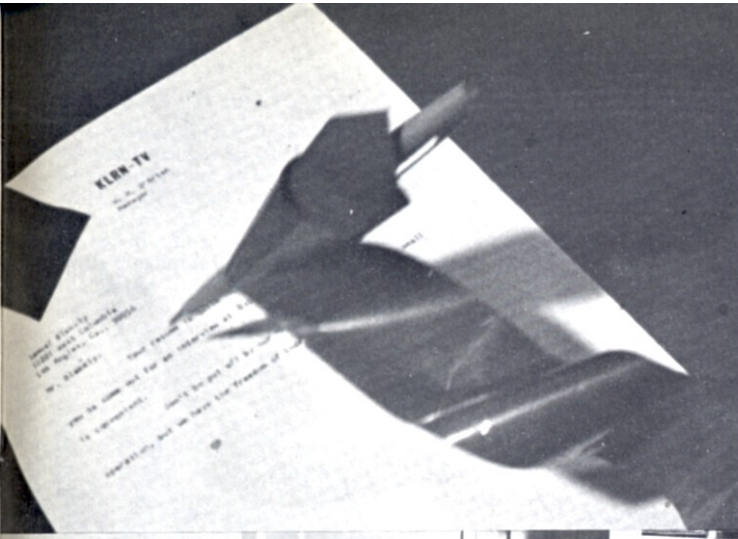
When I was done I had a collection of sounds cut together in sync with the picture, along with an assortment of pops, hisses, and wide ranging levels. Luckily, the final step, re-recording the sounds onto one coherent sound track while minimizing the anomalies, was carried out by Ben Burt, a fellow student at USC (now an Oscar winner for his incredible effects sounds in STAR WARS). His skill at USC's venerable mixing board lifted the overall quality of the sound well above that normally achieved in student films.

One often has a kind of post natal depression on finishing a film. Mine was not helped by the fact that RECORDED LIVE got a cool reception from the Cinema Department at large; it was a little too odd. I pursued other coursework and eventually graduated, and for the next two years heard virtually nothing about the film. Then I got a call from a friend to ask if I knew RECORDED LIVE was being distributed by Pyramid Films! Soon I learned that USC had indeed made a landmark deal with Pyramid for the film (USC retains all rights to any money earned by films made there). Not only that, the film had won some fifteen international awards by mid 1978, and is still going strong. It was like discovering that an old friend isn't dead after all, but has been traveling abroad and merely forgetting to write. □

by S. S. Wilson

Ames (John Goodwin) & Tape.





You should be proud of all the effort you put into the double **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** issue [7:3/7:4].

It is a monumental tribute to the craftsmen and technicians who collaborated to make **CE3K** the success that it is.

Our thanks for doing such a super job.

STEVEN SPIELBERG
Burbank CA 91505

A few comments on **CE3K**: Spielberg says the idea to first see the Mothership behind Devil's Tower about to rise and settle down in front of the mountain was to surprise the audience, because the last thing we would be expecting is to see the ship do something like this. Why no comment on the deleted footage (which was shot) showing the slow approach to the mountain from a distance by the Mothership, and also no mention of the original concept which was to have several smaller craft guide the ship to Devil's Tower (prior to 'ferrying' by the fist-sized cuboids—a concept which, as stated in the text, was also abandoned.)

Concerning the monolith type structure from which the aliens emerge, no comment is made concerning the fact that when the Mothership descends we clearly see eight rectangular portals in a horizontal row, and after the ship has touched down, only six remain. Yet later when the ship is leaving, we again see eight!

As for one of the finest elements of **CE3K**, John William's magnificent score, I was quite disappointed that only a few words are devoted to such an important factor in the film. The 'conversation' sequence alone is worthy of several paragraphs. You may say that it has been covered elsewhere—true—but then again much of what you have here had been published elsewhere before.

As for the smiling alien 'Puck', no comment on the amazing fact that when we see Puck walk away from Lacombe back to the ship, his neck and torso are no longer so much longer in proportion to his legs and body as to indicate clearly that this is a creature from another world, something I found to be the greatest flaw in the film. Spielberg was foolish not to de-

lete these few seconds. They were unnecessary from any point of view. Nevertheless, I happen to believe **CE3K** is a masterpiece in spite of its flaws.

STAN KAMEN
43-10 53 St, Woodside NY 11377

[According to assistant cameraman Scott Squires, who photographed the Mothership with Dennis Muren, no footage of the ship approaching Devil's Tower from a distance was actually shot. Prior to shooting, many scenarios for the Mothership action were considered and abandoned. The rectangular portals on the Mothership hatchway were placed on the miniature, which landed and took off, with yellow Chart-Pak tape. Greg Jein worked from blueprints of the full-size hatchway constructed first in Mobile. Somewhere in between, two portals became lost in the shuffle.]

I didn't mind the double issue on **STAR WARS** (6:4/7:1), and I even waded through the double issue on **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS**, but please, please spare us the details of **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA**!

TERREL L. TEMPLEMAN
3943 SE 174, Portland OR 97236

Please recognize that film criticism is not the leveling of negative comments, however cleverly made—but the lucid, appreciative, fair-minded examination of both the strengths and weaknesses of a work of art. Reviews like **THE FURY** by Steven Dimeo (7:3/7:4) aren't worthy of a place in a serious consideration of current *cinéfantastique*. Dimeo fails to mention a single virtue which the film does possess. De Palma elicited one of Kirk Douglas's few moving performances in **THE FURY**. The comedic characters Dimeo so detested were beautifully acted. And so forth. I have no desire to make an exhaustive list of what De Palma did right. Your magazine, Mr. De Palma and your readers all deserve to see a better examination of **THE FURY**.

CAROLYN AMOS
4217 Arden, Ft Worth TX 76103

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The Attack of the River Lizard

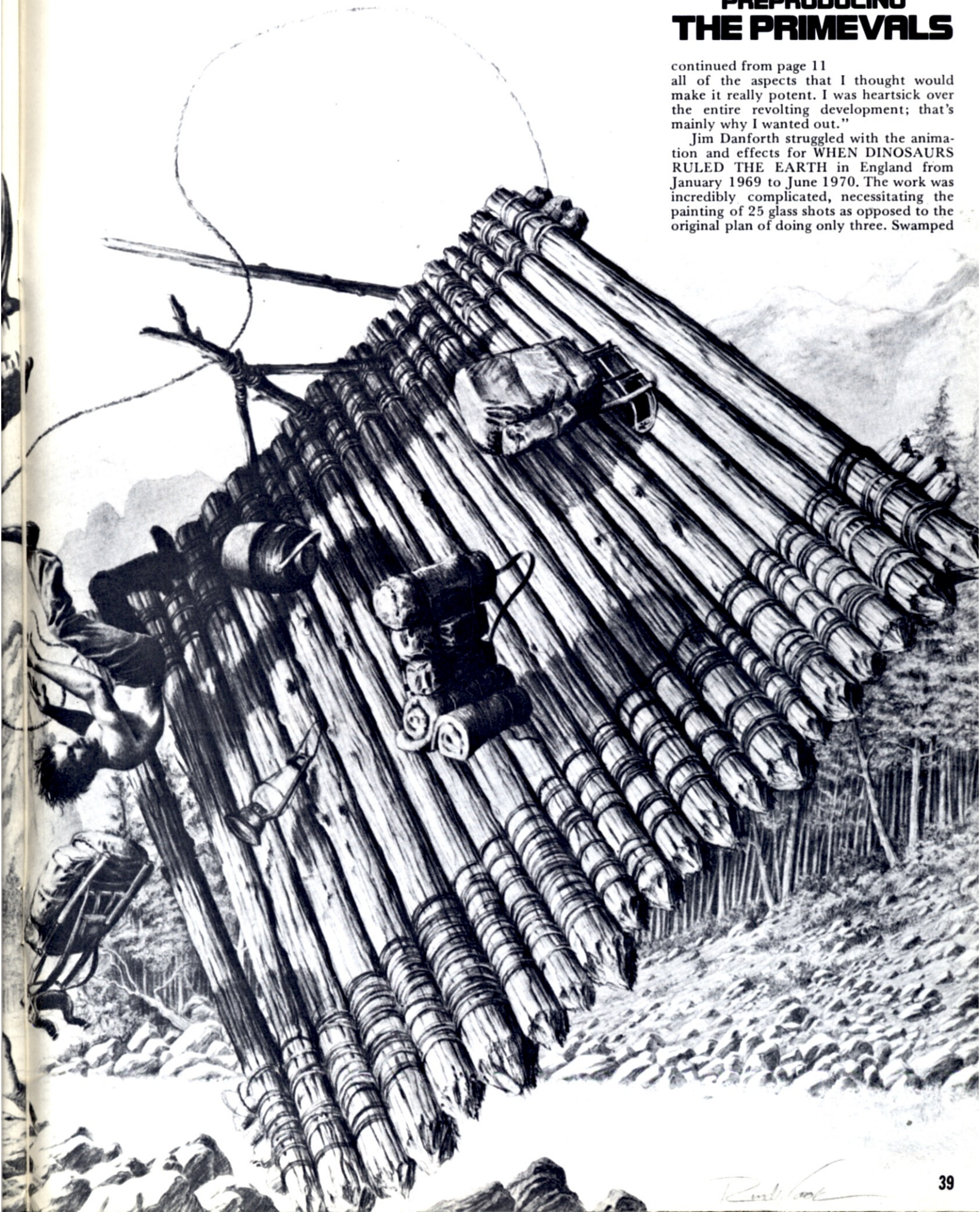
A preproduction sketch by Randy Cook of a special effects sequence in THE PRIMEVALS, based on an original script written by Cook and David Allen. Allen designed the River Lizard, one of numerous stop-motion creatures to appear in the film. The River Lizard animation model is pictured on page 45.



PREPRODUCING THE PRIMEVALS

continued from page 11
all of the aspects that I thought would make it really potent. I was heartsick over the entire revolting development; that's mainly why I wanted out."

Jim Danforth struggled with the animation and effects for WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH in England from January 1969 to June 1970. The work was incredibly complicated, necessitating the painting of 25 glass shots as opposed to the original plan of doing only three. Swamped



"In 1968. I had been conceiving the very beginnings of what became THE PRIMEVALS script today. But in making some suggestions to take the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING script in that direction, Hammer did not seem to comprehend any of it. They simply had their own banal ideas. Some of it reflected in their growing concern over the time Jim Danforth was consuming for the animation on WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH. They said something like 'We feel that the film would be just as exciting if we had an enemy tribe wearing strange headgear.'"

David Allen

with seemingly endless scenes, Danforth requested that Dave Allen take a hiatus from his job doing commercials at Cascade Pictures and help him out with the Chasmosaur sequence, among other things, 80% of which was eventually animated by Allen. Ironically, Allen was then within the confines of the Hammer complex but communication was nil. "RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING had pretty much blown over by the time I got out there to help Jim. I could recall thinking it rather strange that for the seven or eight weeks I was at Hammer, nobody mentioned anything about it, despite the fact that several months before, the property had been such a hot issue! As it turned out, Hammer never paid a dime for anything that we did. I had been wasting a lot of time writing lots of letters back

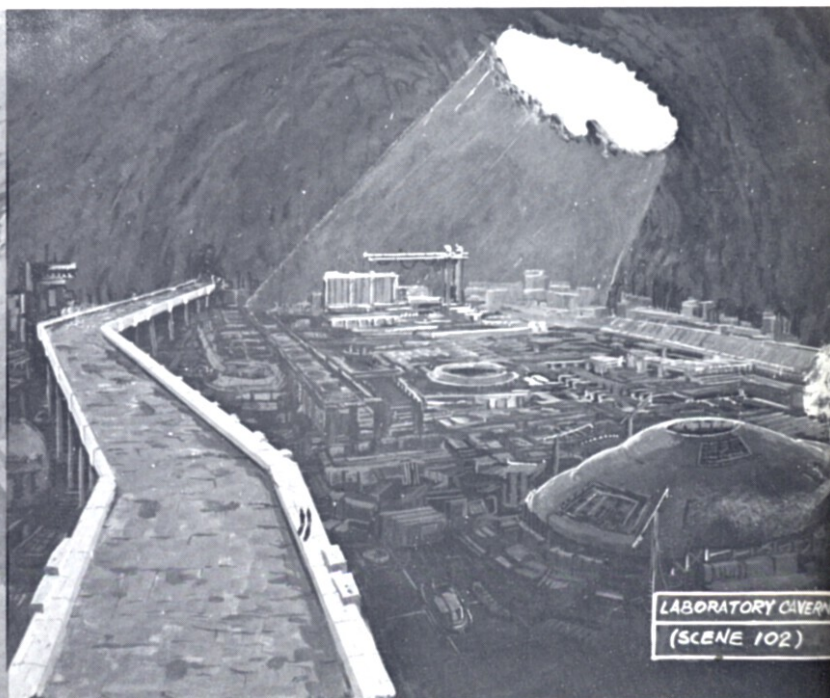
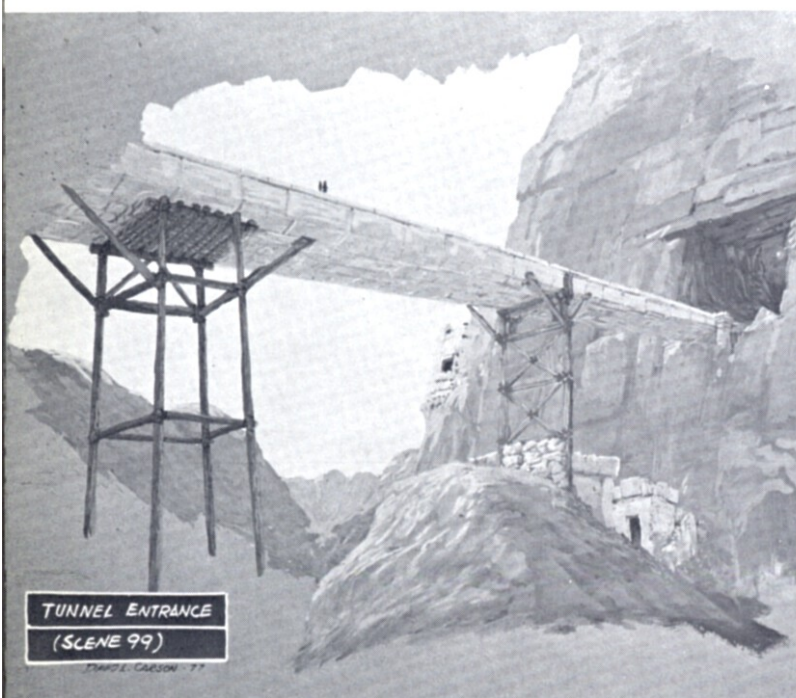
and forth, and they never even had the courtesy to tell me that they had decided against the film! I never tried to approach the executives at Hammer in person; it's really a waste of time. If they don't come to you, you might as well forget it. I honestly felt that they just didn't know anything about making this kind of picture. In fact, in terms of several of the key people on record, it was a case of just being in it for the money. They had indexed certain kinds of percentages of profit—vampire films would make this much money, and Frankenstein films would make that much money—with no importance attached to how good (or bad) the films might be. It seemed to have no effect."

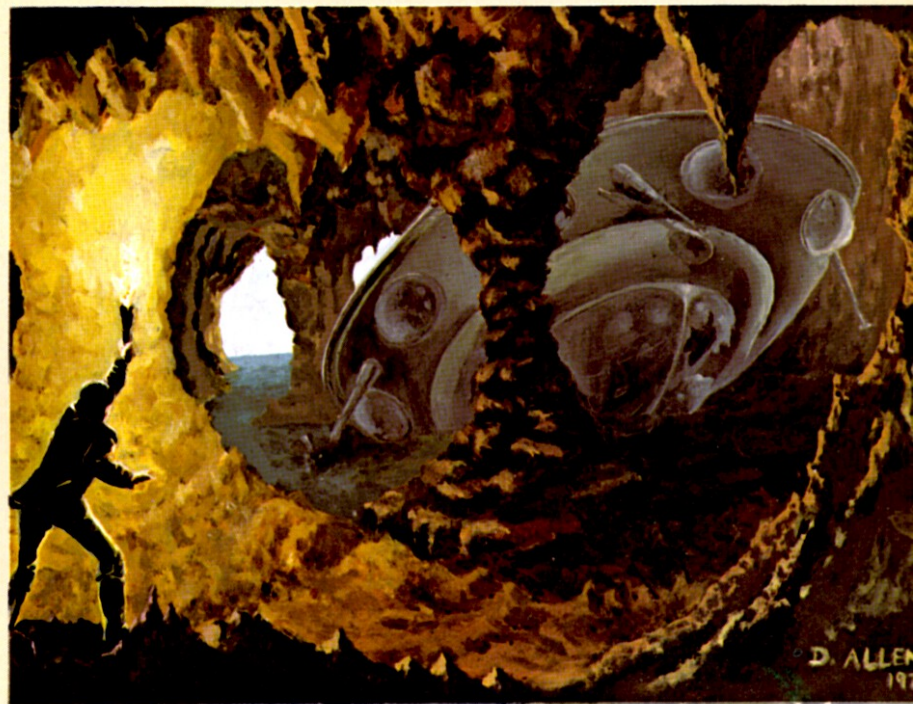
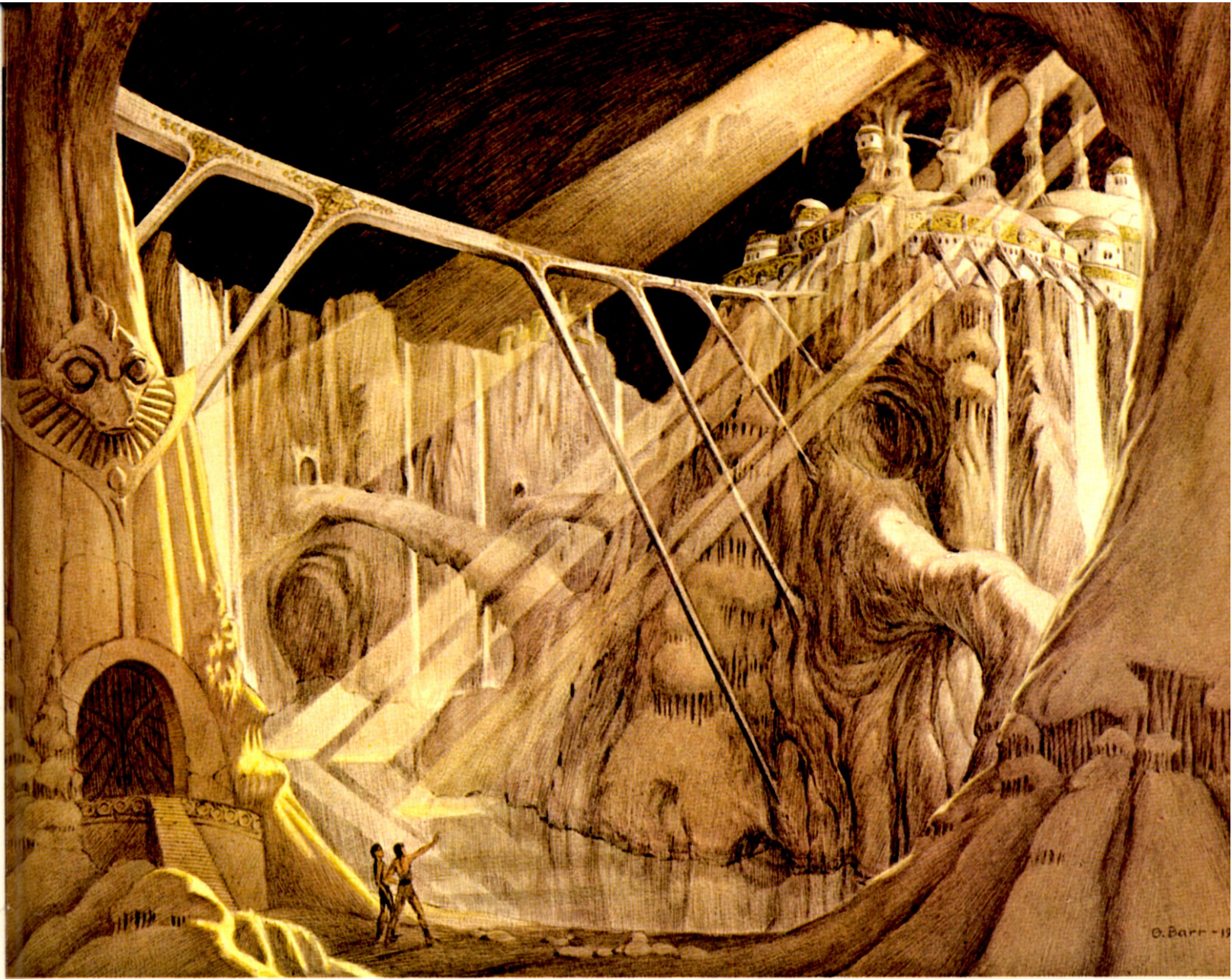
Another great source of disillusionment for David Allen was the situation at Walt Disney's. Shortly after RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was written, Allen found out through Tom Scherman that Disney had an option to a property called ISLAND AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD, a book that was written in the early sixties but was considerably different than the version that Disney later produced. In 1967, the studio first announced that they were going to make the film. The resemblance between it and RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was uncanny, but since there was no chance of any plagiarism being involved as far as Disney's story people were concerned, it was just an incredible case of simultaneous inspiration. "It was one of those damnable things," recalls Allen, "because they had all the ideas I had, and I hadn't known anything about this! In fact, the only place in the States where RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING was presented was at Warners, but that was much later on. Disney changed the book

around to suit their own ideas. Although I never read the story, I understand that rather than a zeppelin that goes to the North Pole, it was a helicopter in modern times, akin to THE LAND UNKNOWN. They tried to give it a Jules Verne flavor.

"I was kind of distressed when I heard that Disney had this picture on the drawing boards. Several thematic developments seemed incredibly coincidental. I heard that they were even going to use a zeppelin, although it was going to be a more fantastic, baroque-looking ship, whereas mine was more of a literal zeppelin warbomber. Nevertheless, there were enough points of correspondency between the two premises to leave me quite unsettled." A year later, Disney decided to shelve the project. "I was greatly relieved to hear this at the time. Usually when a project is put on the shelf, that means it's just the Kiss of Death. But dammit, this film was like a phoenix! It just wouldn't die! They finally made the thing, but I'm sure they would've been happier had they left it on the shelf. It cost a lot of money, went way over budget and way over schedule and it lost tons of money. Nobody bought tickets. Also, it had the usual problems of a Disney picture. They don't permit themselves anything that smacks of sensationalism, so they end up denying themselves anyplace for the imagination to really romp. As far as the Vikings being trapped in isolation, I had the same idea, but it was just a jumping off point for my film. Basically, the Disney people had nowhere to go once they got their adventure rolling. You know, they give you killer whales. Who cares about killer whales? I had no desire to see the film and inflict myself with that. I wasn't in a masochistic mood."

Top Right: Inside the Stone Ring volcano, a George Barr production sketch of the discovery of the lizard man city by explorers, circa 1971. By this time RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING had evolved into a property known as THE GLACIAL EMPIRE. Bottom Right: In 1969, the idea of introducing the concept of an ancient extraterrestrial visitation into the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING story occurred to David Allen, and eventually became the basis for the script of THE PRIMEVALS. Allen sketched the idea in this painting while in England animating the Chasmosaur sequence for WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH. Bottom Left: Preproducing THE PRIMEVALS today: matte artist Jena Holman prepares a matte painting of an outpost high in the Himalaya mountains. Below is Holman's completed background painting of the Himalayas. This Page Below: Art director Dave Carson's rendering of scenes from THE PRIMEVALS script. Right: The Laboratory Cavern, as the climax of the film begins to unfold. Note the alien saucer, lower right, which now becomes the setting for the Arena sequences. Left: The Tunnel Entrance to the Laboratory Cavern.





"If most people feel that **THE PRIMEVALS** is a realistic movie with solid dramatic values functioning from beginning to end, then I will feel that I've succeeded. That's where Ray Harryhausen takes the easier way out, because he constructs a fantastic world peopled by characters almost as unrealistic as what happens to them. It removes his work from the kind of considerations I'm talking about."

David Allen

In its next stage of development, around 1970, **RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING** mutated into a script called **THE GLACIAL EMPIRE**. Mark McGee helped Dave Allen write this hybrid, which retained the Zeppelin, but hardly any of it survives in the present script of **THE PRIMEVALS**. The project moved around town to different producers for several years under the alternate title **PRIMORDIUM: THE ARCTIC WORLD**, but nothing came of it. Again, it was a frustrating affair for Allen, something to be tucked away in lieu of more realistic endeavors like earning a living at Cascade Pictures in order to buy food and pay the rent. In his spare time, Allen would apply himself to his half hour puppet film for TV called **THE MAGIC TREASURE**, animating models and building an entire village in miniature with a little help from his friends. The puppet film progressed in spurts—to date it is about 85% done. "Ironically," says Allen, "the original property was to be 'The Selfish Giant' from a story by Oscar Wilde, but again, it was made when I was ready to start animating and I had no idea it was being made!"

In 1975, a young actor-filmmaker and former artist at Disney's named Randy Cook came into the picture. Randy had been approached by an independent producer on the East coast who asked him if he'd be interested in directing a film. In order for the producer to get some money together, he needed a property. "I didn't know Randy very well then," remembers Allen, "but he knew about **RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING**. He called me up and expressed his interest in the project. I briefly explained what had happened to the property over the years and that I felt the old script was no longer workable. I told Randy I had a very brief synopsis for a new story, but that it needed fleshing out. He suggested that we both put our heads together and write up a complete synopsis for presentation and approval. After two or three months, we had it down on paper, but around the time we were winding up, we heard that this producer had been thrown in jail! In any case, I was happy to get the treatment into presentable condition. Then, more or less on our own, we decided to continue working on it even though we had nowhere to turn, hoping that something might come up. We did a lot of further collaborating based on the treatment, producing a first draft script. That, in fact, is the script we have for **THE PRIMEVALS** now, although I am constantly rewriting and improving it."

Makeup artist Steven Neill provided the final link in the long chain of events by at-



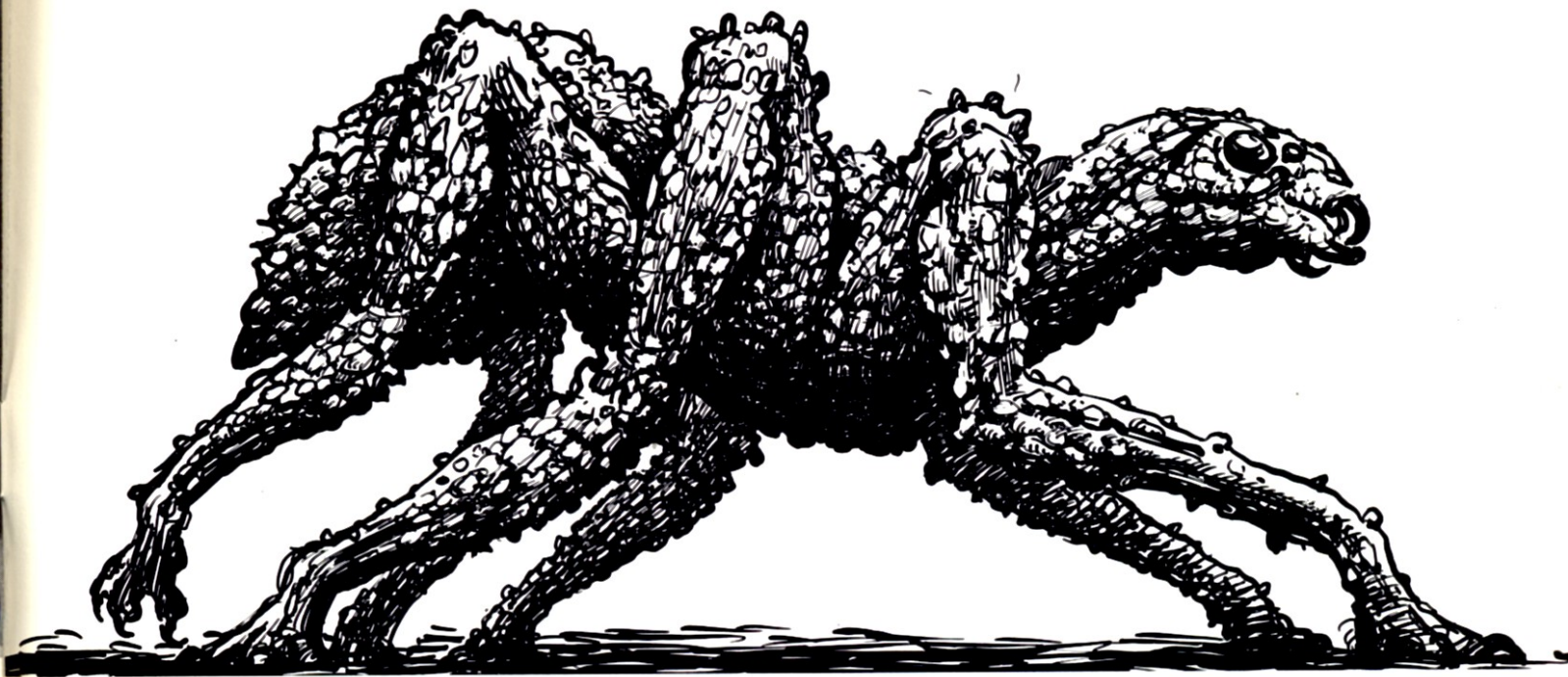
tracting producer Charles Band's interest in **THE PRIMEVALS**. Neill recommended Allen to Band for the stop-motion work required in **LASER BLAST**, which Band had in production at the time (see 7:1:4). As an example of his work, Allen dug out his footage on the **RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING** presentation reel, which he had begun revamping in 1976. "I went way, way back into the old stuff and shot a few inserts just to round out a couple of effects shots." Neill made the reel available to Charles Band, and Allen got the job on **LASER BLAST**. In fact, Band wanted to use the presentation reel's lizard man for his own film, an idea nixed by Allen who wanted to save the model for his own project. When work on **LASER BLAST** was complete, Allen managed to get **THE PRIMEVALS** script on Band's desk, and suddenly the project was no longer a pipe-dream.

Financed by Charles Band Productions, preproduction work on **THE PRIMEVALS** is in full gear, and the budget is promising to spiral well over the million dollar bracket. David Allen has assembled a talented corps of artists, many with whom he has had long-term affiliations. Among them are Phil Tippett who is busy casting models; Dave Carson, noted illustrator known for his Ray Harryhausen Portfolio, who is serving as art director; Ken Ralston, whose prior work at Cascade and photographic background are assets to the production; Tom St. Amand, a skillful model and armature builder; Robin Loudon, Allen's production assistant; Randy Cook, assistant animator, writer and sculptor; Dave Stipes, and Dennis Gordon, miniature makers; and Jena Holman, the matte painter on the show.

The most intriguing aspect of **THE PRIMEVALS**' effects work is the fact that Charles Band has requested the picture be done in Panavision. While this might sound benign to the layman, it complicates the old Dynamation technique quite a bit. Panavision, being an anamorphic system, is basically a "wide-angling" field of view process. In copying a small rear-projected image, the Panavision camera increases the left-to-right area but cuts off the process

image at the *top and bottom*. That is one basic complication. It is possible to copy a "squeezed" or anamorphic rear-projected image with the taking camera, but the puppet would be "unsqueezed" and therefore incompatible. Miniature rear-projection itself presents a problem in Panavision—longer lenses are required. Without expensive accessories, the normal "throw" of the projection would not be closer than forty feet. Being confined to longer lenses on the Panavision taking camera would not only make it difficult to *focus* on the puppet but would also cause an undesirable flattening of perspective. In addition to all of this, there is a tremendous hot-spot problem in doing process work in the Panavision format; the edges of the screen appear darker, relative to the center. Fall-off of light intensity in rear screen work is even a problem in the standard Academy format. Front projection in Panavision is a possibility, but that means getting into other problems which have to do with anamorphic lenses on the taking camera having a *double nodal plane*. This would make the shadow of the puppet difficult to hide, since it has to eclipse perfectly for front projection to work. *That means one would have to go to a non-anamorphic system, such as 65mm, but that veers into other problems.* "In the long run," observes Allen, "it just isn't worth it. Front projection was a possibility, but in studying the problem, I felt it just wouldn't look as good as it would with mattes. So I'll probably use traveling mattes as Ray Harryhausen did in **FIRST MEN IN THE MOON**. I'm not sure what matting system Ray used, but I'll animate using the front light and back light technique, possibly in combination with blue screen."

The front light and back light matting system is a process that happens to lend itself to model animation; it couldn't be done with live action. Explaining it isn't all that difficult, but its actual practice requires considerable concentration. Front light and back light matting is merely a way of eliminating the need to use miniature rear projection by producing a traveling matte of the puppet via exposure of "alternate frames" *during* animation. For



Above: Randy Cook's sketch of the spider monster, which lurks amid mountainous caverns in *THE PRIMEVALS*. Left: David Allen, holding armature, discusses construction of the animation model with Cook. The armature being used was actually constructed by Jim Danforth for an ant creature in *WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH*, abandoned when time ran short.

example, Frame A would be an exposure of the model against a dark background, and the stage the puppet is on could be obscured by placing a piece of black velvet in front of the camera lens. (Since the velvet would not have to be precisely cut, it can be considered a "garbage matte.") Frame B would be an exposure of the model in the same position with a white background and no lighting, providing a silhouette matte of the puppet. [See frame clip illustration on page 8]. A *black process screen* facilitates the technique—screen off for Frame A provides a black background; screen on for Frame B provides a white background. (Virtually indispensable in this technique is

a camera in which a trim of the background scene to be composited can be inserted and racked over into the optical axis in order to determine precisely how the puppet and the background footage will line up later on. Thus, looking through the viewfinder of the camera, the background scene would appear to be superimposed over the puppet.)

The lab uses the silhouette matte on Frame B to produce high-contrast mattes and countermattes which are used to do the holding out during the interpositive printing stage. Shooting alternate frames during animation allows the optical printer to "skip-frame" on the original footage to transfer the silhouette matte to high contrast stock.

"I feel confident enough that we can produce mattes with little or no objectionable fringing," says Allen. "In the end it'll probably turn my hair gray but it'll look better. I know that. *FIRST MEN IN THE MOON* looked better than anything Harryhausen has ever done, just for the reason

that there is hardly any double-dupe process photography going on."

Interestingly, Harryhausen has used front light and back light matting in very small doses on non-Panavision films like *THE 3 WORLDS OF GULLIVER* and *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* simply to avoid the texture of the process screen from showing up in tight closeups of models in composite shots.

Every method of composite photography has its drawbacks, of course, and front light and back light matting is no exception. In designing his composite shots for Panavision, Allen is well aware of its limitations. "The problem with it is that you

Below: Randy Cook's sketch of the Hominid man-apes, which play a key role in the plot of *THE PRIMEVALS*, which spans from the prehistory of mankind to our future destiny. Left: Cook sculpts the Hominid makeup. The Hominids will be played primarily by actors in suits, although stop-motion Hominids are required for certain special effects sequences.





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"There's not anything in **THE PRIMEVALS** that is all that revolutionary; a few of the concepts maybe. The style is the thing. I think the personality of this picture will triumph over all possible shortcomings. In that respect, and hopefully a few others, it will be reminiscent of **KING KONG**, not in any particulars, but in the relationship it embodies between the technical and the artistic."
David Allen

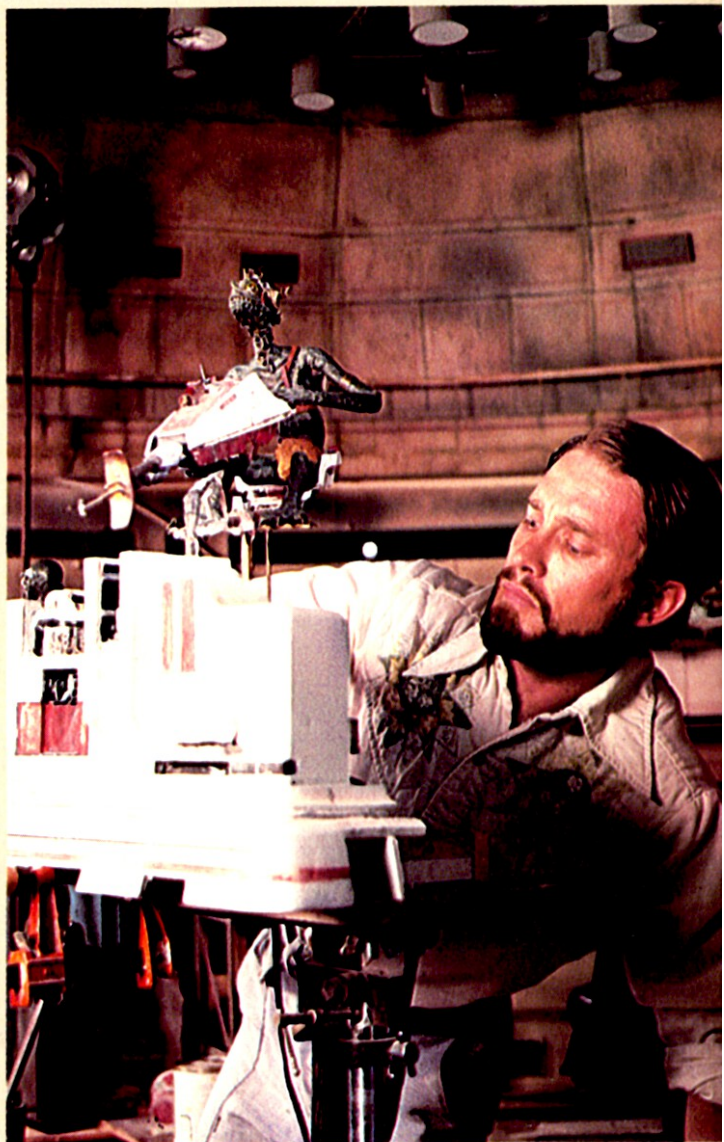
Preproduction work is in full swing on **THE PRIMEVALS** at David Allen's Hollywood studio. These pages illustrate the variety and scope of the special effects work already in progress. 1) A lizard man fires the mind-control gun in the Arena. Inset: A frame blow-up of effects work already shot for the scene. The image is "squeezed" in the Panavision anamorphic process for wide screen projection. 2) The Arena set inside the alien ship where two lizard men attempt to control a rampaging Yeti with the mind-control gun. 3) A closeup of a lizard man as it barks commands over the Arena speaker system. Note the fine detail evident in the miniature set by Dave Stipes and Dennis Gordon. 4 & 5) David Allen animating one of the lizard men. The two key lizard men animation models in this sequence are the original models constructed by Allen for **RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING**. 6) Hordes of lizard men posed on a table top. Smaller, and less detailed than the main figures, they will be used in long shots, as spectators in the Arena scene and in complicated action sequences. 7) A closeup of one of the smaller lizard men animation models, fabricated on wire armatures. 8 & 9) The River Lizard animation model posed and in close-up. 10) Art director Dave Carson sculpts a hybrid dinosaur to replace a ground sloth which appeared in earlier versions of the script. 11 & 12) A stop-motion Hominid, holding a quarter to show scale, to be used for certain special effects scenes.

The Hominids for the most part will be played by actors in makeup. 13) The armature constructed by Jim Danforth for an ant creature in **WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH**, to be modified for use with the spider-monster model in **THE PRIMEVALS**. The ant-like abdomen will be removed. It is posed next to Randy Cook's concept sketch of the Hominids and a still of the finished Hominid masks.

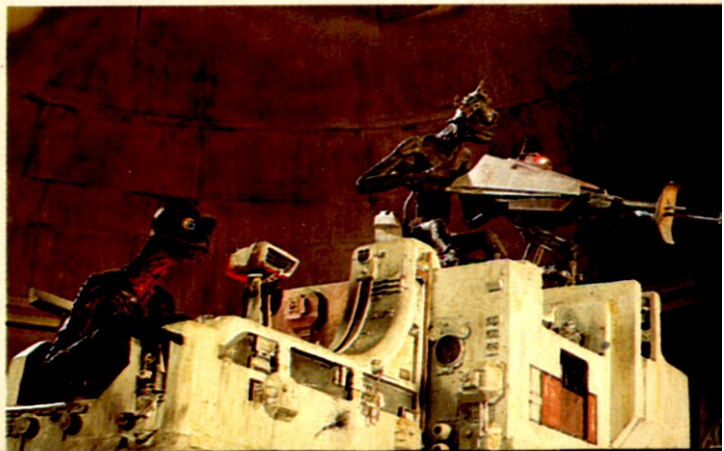


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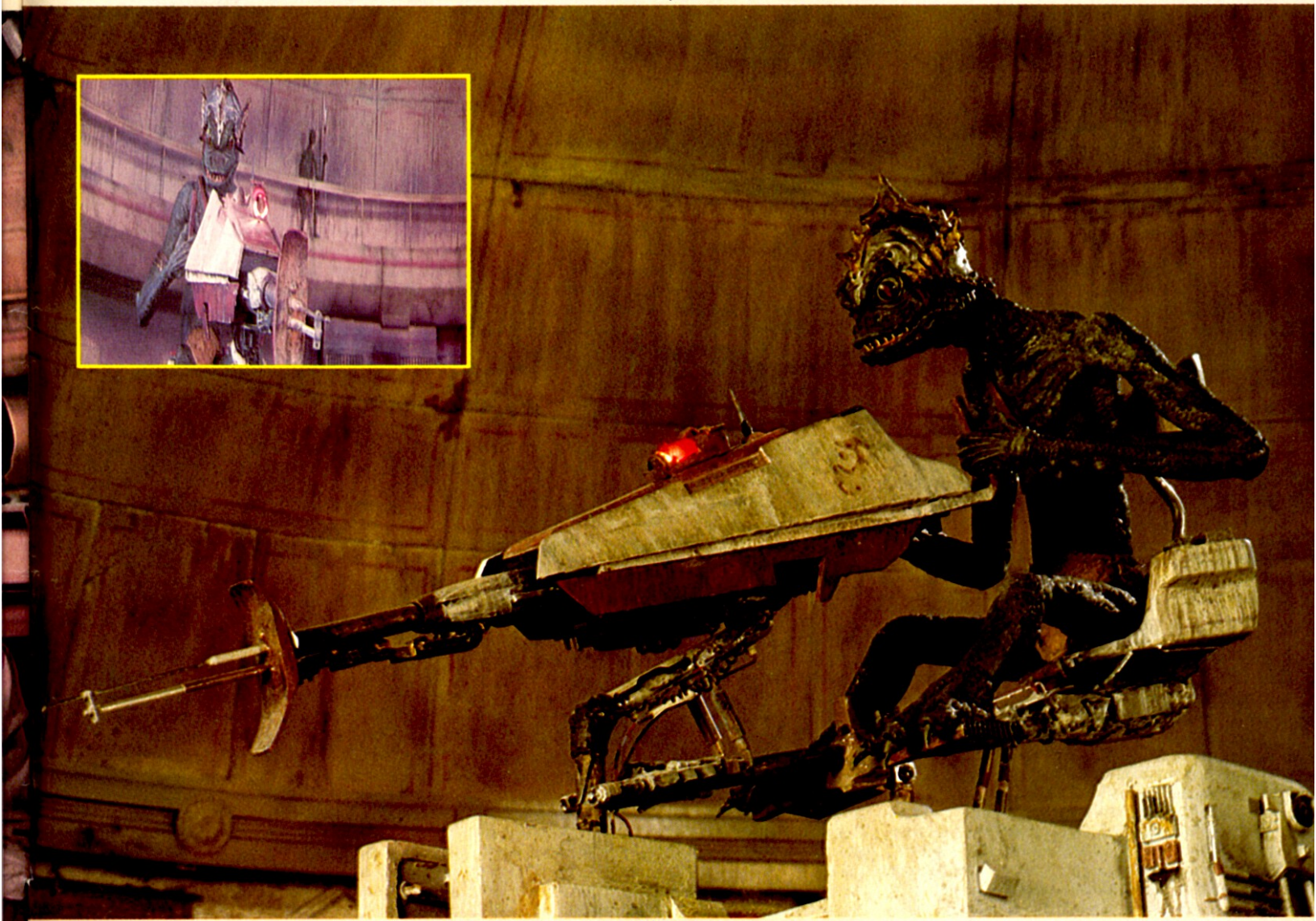
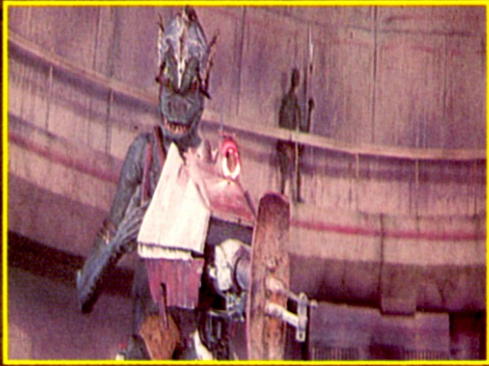


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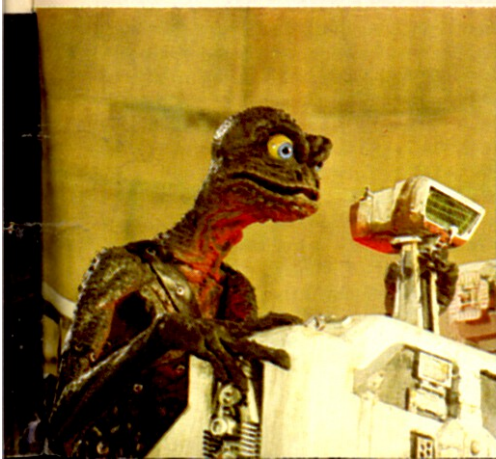
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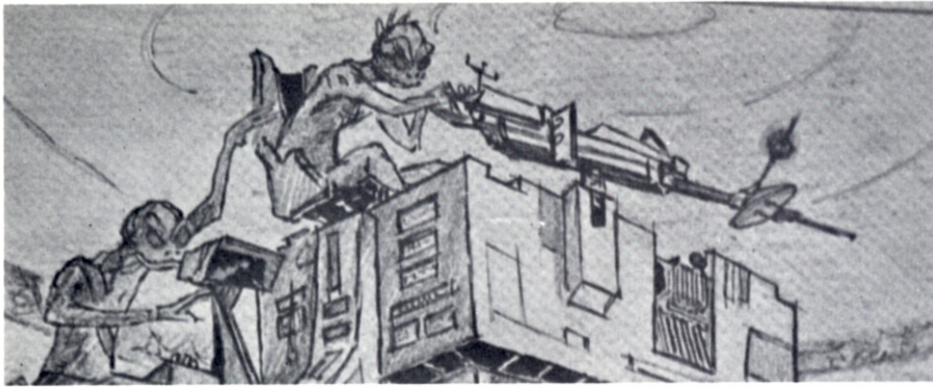


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The Arena: "There's never been a picture like this. The last reel is totally fantastic in aesthetics, but wedded to a plot and premise that is rational."

Facing Page: Art director Dave Carson, building the main section of the Arena miniature set, based on his own production design sketch. Note the sketch shows men in cages hanging from the scaffolding, witnesses to the bizarre action in the sequence involving a captured Yeti. Right: Paul Mandell (left) gauges while Ken Ralston animates the lizard man at the controls of the mind-control gun. Ralston was an assistant effects cameraman on STAR WARS. Above: One of Dave Carson's storyboard sketches for the Arena sequence, done in the wide-screen Panavision aspect ratio. Compare to the actual shot as filmed, picture No. 2 shown on the preceding page.



can't put those nice little shadows under the puppets and have them going into invisible splits, standing right on the "ground" with the people. In situations like that I would probably use blue screen; they can now run double densities and get the shadows you couldn't get before. It might seem obvious to try and come up with ground samples and match it to the color of the background footage using the front light and back light technique to produce the composite, but it really isn't a very practical approach—you "hope" that the two different roll numbers of emulsions "see" the color the same way. You have to do a lot testing, and testing is very expensive. Just an average shot put together using front light and back light matting costs about \$300, and that's just to prepare hi-cons and send it through the printer *once*. More importantly, most of the shadows and anything that's subtle is lost, since everything has to be resolved in blacks and whites. With today's blue screen refinements, those subtleties can be rendered quite successfully."

In a sense, THE PRIMEVALS will face the same problems Ray Harryhausen encountered on FIRST MEN IN THE MOON. Matte shots still have the quality of looking less virgin than the footage which is not composited, but the mattes will look better in quality than the composites achieved by using miniature rear projection. "The same degradation ratio is there," says Allen, "it's just on a higher plane. Even in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND you see the change in image quality. With all the trouble they went to, when it cuts to an effects shot, it *looks* like an effects shot. Despite the fact that they went to 65mm for the effects, by the time they went to the interpositives, went down to 35mm and back up to 65mm, they *lost* all their blacks. This kind of work can seldom be absolutely perfect. When you'll see a cut to an effects shot in THE PRIMEVALS, it's no doubt still going to have a different characteristic. I'm trying to create a film in which that's not going to be fatal.

"I'm no magician," Allen continues. "Ray Harryhausen is an excellent magician. I think that's one of the problems with

Ray's movies—we keep going back to his tent to see the same act. It's a different lady that gets in the box that gets sawed in half, but it's still the same trick. It's bound to start wearing a little thin. Harryhausen and Schneer imply these darkly secret and political rationalizations for the way their films *have to be*. Although I have a great respect and admiration for many of their efforts, I just don't see it as they do. Because they're part of the establishment, they elect to proceed in orthodox ways, to keep the system lubricated. I am hopeful I can avoid those obligations and any of those concerns and do only what's right for the project.

"I'm sure the long shadow of Ray Harryhausen will leave its mark not only on THE PRIMEVALS but my entire career, just as he works in the shadow of Willis O'Brien. I'm just trying to take the good and add something to it. And I'm attempting to make a well-rounded film for a lot less money than Schneer spends, to show others and myself that an undertaking such as THE PRIMEVALS can combine this kind of work and also have real film values."

To reveal the storyline of THE PRIMEVALS at this time would be counter-productive. What can be said, so as not to leave the reader totally out in the twilight zone, is that it delves into an extraordinary aspect of evolution, territory that no filmmaker has trespassed to date. In a sense, it deals with moral concepts—right and wrong, good and evil—in a manner that is not abstract or superficial. "I'm trying to give it some stature," says Allen, "trying to make it more worthwhile than 95% of what we've been seeing." While certain stock ideas established in the original RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING script and other works of the genre are largely intact—lost civilizations, surrealistic locales, anachronistic conflicts, etc.—the film will be more on the level of FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH than that of another LOST WORLD. Allen stresses the need for more gray matter in the standard adventure-fantasy film format. "I'm not looking for the excellence of THE PRIMEVALS to lay strictly in its special effects.

That's my specialty and my handle on the entire project, the reason why I have the credibility and bankability to do it. But if people are talking about this film twenty years from now, I hope it won't be simply because of the animation."

In a sense, we are going to experience THE PRIMEVALS in a way that we haven't experienced model animation since THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS—by being asked to *believe* it, not merely accept it as something out of a fantasy world. "I'd hate to try and sell it that way," says Allen. "Ray Harryhausen now operates in that fashion, and in some respects it makes it easier to put special effects across. But I'm trying to make THE PRIMEVALS work on a *credibility level*, and that's not easy. There's never been a picture like this. The last reel is totally fantastic in aesthetics, but wedded to a plot and premise that is rational."

What did productions like THE THING, THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS and O'Bie's KING KONG have in common? They all took themselves very seriously. That's what's been forgotten in the genre and that's what's being rediscovered in THE PRIMEVALS. Believable characters with motivations mouthing believable lines add to the suspense and the visceral impact of the special effects. "You have to make sure that the *actors* are shown to be believing it," says Allen. "There's an arena sequence with an effects shot in practically every cut. Characters are watching the action from hanging baskets, occasionally matted in where they need to be or substituted with a puppet figure in long shot. The actors will be reacting to something that's totally artificial and contrived, and it will be visually apparent as such.

"If most people feel that THE PRIMEVALS is a realistic movie with solid dramatic values functioning from beginning to end, then I will feel that I've succeeded. That's where Ray Harryhausen takes the easier way out, because he constructs a fantastic world peopled by characters almost as unrealistic as what happens to them. It removes his work from the kind of considerations I'm talking about. You could almost take our



Arena sequence and drop it into a story by Burroughs, except here it makes more demands on the characters and on probability."

As far as directing is concerned, David Allen will be doing most of the honors with Randy Cook doing some sequences. Although Allen readily admits his directorial inexperience as far as feature films are concerned, he feels confident enough to tackle it. Moreover, he recognizes the danger inherent in bringing in someone from the Guild. "If you get a well-known director," Allen points out, "he's going to want to meddle with it in order to serve his own interests. I don't want that kind of problem. As a director, I'm likely to be a bit straight but I think the film will benefit from being shot in a 'classic' manner. *I'm not intimidated directing it.* I think that what I may lack in directorial technique I will make up for in the feeling of what I know the script needs in order for it to work, which is something a journeyman director would *not* know. I think we've seen that enough times in the past."

If you ask David Allen a question, don't ever expect to get a shallow answer—you'd swear his off-the-cuff remarks were predetermined and scientifically calculated. Many consider him to be an intellectual cynic, but that is only a product of his attempt at casting his intellect on the sometimes stagnant (and often shallow) waters of the industry. Allen is very serious-minded, but his conversation is often offset by a hearty laugh. Ask him for the correct time and he will in all probability tell you how to make the proverbial watch. If someone was to do a *parody* of Dave Allen doing the original KING KONG in 1933, it would show him spending four reels explaining how Kong could even *exist!* But perhaps that's the kind of seriousness and integrity that the fantasy-adventure film has been groping for.

As we go to press, Allen and his crew have just completed filming scenes of a mind-altering gun that is fired upon a stop-motion Yeti by two lizard men. In THE PRIMEVALS, stop-motion fans can look forward to a giant horned River Lizard, a hybrid beast resembling a cross between a

mono-clonius and a mammoth (presently being sculpted by Dave Carson), and an animated spider-monster. The Yeti will be one of the most surprising characters in stop-motion history, though for now its role in the film must be shrouded in secrecy. There are many Kong-like elements to its character and Allen has endowed it with a range of facial expression that has not been achieved since MIGHTY JOE YOUNG. In addition, there are literally *hordes* of lizard men in situations that promise to transcend the most complex Harryhausen action sequences. Some of the work will even be done by replacement animation, which should raise a few eyebrows. "In terms of their design," says Allen of his lizard men creations, "they're really more in keeping with the flavor of the RAIDERS OF THE STONE RING property, which was more of a Sword and Sorcery adventure yarn. But I have found from people who have seen our test footage that the models generate a lot of excitement and the scenes go over very well." Also on view will be animated Hominids, strange australopithecine-like man-apes which play an important part in the story, a story that Allen promises to have "an intellectual O'Henry" ending for.

Executive producer Charles Band sees it all as an extreme departure from his usual low-budget programmers, but a solid project. In David Allen, Band has found the dedicated artist with the kind of know-how and integrity it takes to pull-off a film like THE PRIMEVALS. Interestingly, the relationship is not unlike that which developed between Ray Harryhausen and producer Charles H. Schnee back in 1957 when THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD began production. "It's really the most exciting project that I've ever been involved with," says Band. "I'm used to shooting a film and having it ready in 120 days from inception to execution. With THE PRIMEVALS, we're taking about a year and a half! The use of Panavision was my idea. It's really a spectacle of sorts, and I felt that the wide-screen look is meaningful for the show. We know that from STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. We took on a lot of

"I'm not looking for the excellence of THE PRIMEVALS to lay strictly in its special effects. That's my specialty and my handle on the entire project, the reason why I have the credibility and bankability to do it. But if people are talking about this film twenty years from now, I hope it won't be simply because of the animation."

David Allen

trouble for the sake of Panavision, not so much in the principal photography, but in terms of special effects work. It's something that really hasn't been done before when you consider the amount of animation going into it.

"The budget promises to spiral into the \$2½ million bracket," says Band proudly. "We're talking about the possibility of going on location in the Himalayas for some sequences. But a good chunk of the budget will either directly or indirectly go toward the special effects. We're not going to cheat this one out of anything!"

THE PRIMEVALS is a ten year-old dream come true for thirty-three year-old animator David Allen. Without trying to toot his own horn too loudly, Allen sums up his feelings toward the awesome task that still lies mostly before him: "There's not anything in THE PRIMEVALS that is all that revolutionary; a few of the concepts maybe. The style is the thing. I don't have all that much experience, admittedly. And twenty years from now I might wish I had some simpler film to cut my teeth on. But I think the personality of this picture will really triumph over any possible shortcomings. I think in that respect, and hopefully in a few others, it will be reminiscent of KING KONG, not in any particulars, but in the relationship it embodies between the technical and the artistic.

"It'll be one of those films that when you come out of the theatre, you'll say to yourself: 'Of course, *of course* this picture. Why hasn't it happened before now?'" □



LORD OF THE RINGS



Scenes from Ralph Bakshi's LORD OF THE RINGS, the first of two films based on J. R. R. Tolkien's wondrous fantasy trilogy, to be released this Thanksgiving. Left: Orthanc, the fortress of Saruman, the Wise. Bottom: The Nazgul, servants of Sauron, the Dark Lord, ride out of Bree, in search of Bilbo and the Ring of Power. Top: Gandalf the Gray is betrayed by Saruman inside Orthanc. Middle: The transformation of the Balrog. After three years in the making, Tolkien comes alive on the screen this Fall

Ralph Bakshi on LORD OF THE RINGS, page 34